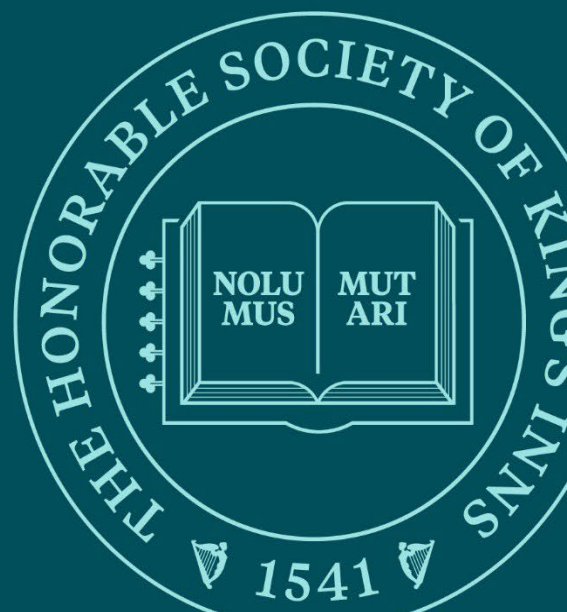


# **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSIONS**

## **SUBMISSION OF THE HONORABLE SOCIETY OF KING'S INNS**

JANUARY 2026



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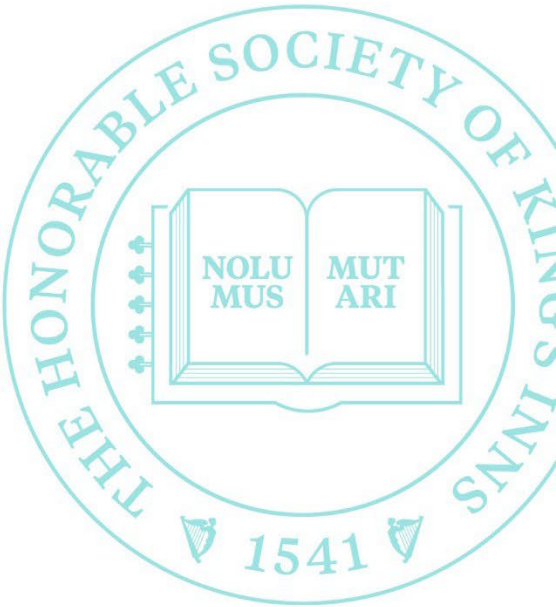
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# INTRODUCTION AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION NOTICE

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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 12 December 2025. The request is set out in *Questions for the Honorable Society of King's Inns LSRA Annual Report on Admission Policies of Legal Profession 2025* and a *General Consultation Notice* by which the LSRA seeks submissions in respect of the admission policies of the legal professions.

The first part of this document relates to the public consultation notice.

## Response to Public Consultation Notice

This submission is made in response to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority's public consultation, with a particular focus on issues pertaining to the education and admission policies for legal professionals in Ireland. The scope of this response is intentionally limited to these topics and does not address matters relating to legal costs. The objective is to contribute constructively to the ongoing review of legal education and admission standards, ensuring they continue to serve the public interest and uphold the highest standards expected within the profession.

King's Inns has long been recognised as a preeminent institution for legal education in Ireland, setting exemplary standards for the training and development of barristers. The institution's rigorous curriculum, input from members of the judiciary and bar, and commitment to academic excellence ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding required for professional practice. The professional achievements of alumni provide compelling evidence of the quality of education delivered. Furthermore, King's Inns responsiveness to evolving legal and educational landscapes—such as the integration of hybrid teaching methods—demonstrates its commitment to maintaining relevance and excellence in legal education.

The standard of education and training for admission to the legal profession is of paramount importance in safeguarding the public interest, protecting consumers, and upholding the integrity of the justice system. Robust educational requirements ensure that barristers qualified in Ireland possess not only substantive legal knowledge but also the other core competencies required of a practising barrister, including legal skills and professional competencies.

High standards in legal professional education are essential for the effective representation of clients, the administration of justice, and the maintenance of public confidence in the legal system. By setting and maintaining high standards King's Inns contributes directly to the quality and reliability of legal services available to the public.

Consistent and transparent criteria for admission ensure that candidates who meet the appropriate academic and professional standards are eligible to enter the profession. This approach serves the public interest by guaranteeing that legal professionals are competent, ethical, and well-prepared for the responsibilities they undertake.

Section 13(4) of the Legal Services Regulation Act sets out key objectives for the Authority, including protecting and promoting the public interest, supporting the proper and effective administration of justice, and encouraging education and training standards. The education and admission policies currently in place align closely with these objectives. They ensure that the profession is well equipped to serve the needs of the public and the justice system. These policies also support the Authority's mandate to uphold standards in legal education and promote the availability of high-quality legal services.

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

# KING'S INNS RESPONSE TO LSRA QUESTIONS

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## Admissions to Degree of Barrister-at-Law and Call to the Bar 2025 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.

### BL Students

#### 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 2025.**
  - 181 candidates sat the Entrance Exam 2025, 144 (80%) passed and 37(20%) failed.
- 2 The number of students who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2025 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.**
  - 141 students commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2025. 2 sought Leave of Absence from Modular.
  - 42 (30%) students commenced the course on a full-time basis and 97 (70%) students commenced the course on a modular basis.
  - Of the total of 139, 74 (53%) identify as female and 65 (47%) students identify as male.
  - Of the 42 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 25 (60%) identify as female and 17 (40%) identify as male.
  - Of the 97 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 49 (51%) identify as female and 48 (49%) identify as male.
  - Of the 139 who commenced the Barrister-at-Law degree course in 2025, 57 (41%) are in the 31 and over age category and 82 (59%) are in the 30 and under age category.

- Of the 42 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 12 (29%) students are in the 31 and over age category and 30 (71%) are in the 30 and under age category.
- Of the 97 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 45 (46%) students are in the 31 or over age category and 52 (54%) are in the 30 and under age category.
- Of the 42 students who commenced the course on a full-time basis, 11 (26%) hold the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies and 31 (74%) 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 97 students who commenced the course on a modular basis, 33 (34%) hold the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies and 64 (66%) 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 2025 with a breakdown bases on the following; (i) route of admission; (ii) gender; (iii) age (30 and under, 31 and over).**
  - In 2025 there were 150 admissions to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar.
  - Of these, 127 completed the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree course.
  - 13 Barristers of England & Wales were admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar (Education Rules Rule 25)
  - 8 Northern Ireland Barristers were admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar (Education Rules Rule 20).
  - 1 EU Directive was admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar (Education Rules Rule 24).
  - 1 was re-admitted by the Benchers, having previously been voluntarily disbarred.
  - 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 150 called to the Bar in 2025, 68 identify as male and 82 identify as female.
  - Of the 127 barristers admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar in 2025 having completed the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law Degree course 62 (49%) students are in the 30 and under age category and 65 (51%) are in the 31 and over age category.

4. The number of barristers entering pupillage in 2025 that completed the;
  - (i) King's Inns full-time BL degree course in 2025.  
Of the 51 that completed the Barrister-at-Law full-time degree course in 2025 35 entered pupillage in October 2025
  - (ii) King's Inns modular BL degree course in 2025.  
Of the 76 that completed the Barrister-at-Law degree Modular course in 2025 17 entered the entered pupillage in October 2025
5. The number of barristers who were disbarred in 2025 and the reasons for this.
  - 14 barristers were voluntarily disbarred in 2025 on becoming solicitors.
  - 0 barristers were disbarred in 2025, other than the above voluntary disbarments.

## Admissions Developments & Breaking Down Barriers Information

6. Please provide details of King's Inns initiatives to further increase flexible routes for barrister training and their impact in 2025. (Please see recommendation no 1 in Breaking Down Barriers report).

In order to be eligible to undertake barrister training, a person must have completed the academic phase of training. This means that they are required to hold a legal qualification and must show that, in the course leading to the legal qualification, 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 Accreditation Board for eligibility to sit the Entrance Exam. The list of approved legal qualifications is continuously expanding. At present, there are 94 approved qualifications, awarded by 19 institutions across the island of Ireland. The full list is available here: [schedule-of-king's-inns-approved-degrees-21.02.25.pdf](#). This provides intending barristers with a significant level of flexibility in how, when, and where to undertake the academic phase of training.

Having completed this academic phase of training, the next step is completion of the King's Inns Entrance Examination, which covers five subjects (Criminal Law, Irish Constitutional Law, Law of Evidence, Contract Law, Law of Torts).

All candidates who pass the Entrance Exam are offered a place on the degree course.

King's Inns has a number of measures in place to increase flexibility into barrister training, many of which were already in place prior to 2025. These include the following:

- **The option to undertake the Barrister-at-Law degree programme either full-time or on a part-time (modular) basis**  
Students can either undertake the course from late September-May on a full-time basis, attending class and / or assessments 5 (or sometimes 6) days per week, or on part-time / modular basis over a two year period (September-June and September-May). Students participating in the modular programme attend classes mostly on weekends.
- **The use of "hybrid" delivery for elements of both the full-time and modular programmes**  
On both the full-time and modular programmes, King's Inns has identified sessions which can be delivered online, using interactive videoconferencing software. This reduces the burden on students to travel to King's Inns. In recognition of the fact that many modular students work full-time and may live outside the general Dublin area, a higher percentage of the modular programme is delivered online than the full-time programme.
- **The provision of the Diploma in Legal Studies, which provides an open and flexible pathway to completion of the academic phase of training**  
The Diploma in Legal Studies is a highly regarded, two-year accelerated academic programme in substantive law. It is open to graduates of disciplines other than Law who may wish to pursue a career as a barrister. It is also open to mature

students that 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 have the capacity to undertake the course. The mature entry route is a fundamental principle of the Diploma in Legal Studies and aims to increase diversity on both the Diploma programme and, by extension, the Barrister-at-Law programme and within the barrister profession.

- **The provision of a study skills course for students on the Diploma in Legal Studies**  
This course is aimed at mature entrants to the course and at those who have been out of education for some time. It is intended to ease the path back to education for these entrants and covers a range of study skills. The course takes place shortly before the start of the academic term and is delivered by the academic coordinator of the programme. It takes place online, to facilitate access.

- **The adoption, in 2025, of a new Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, which will enhance and improve the existing access to places on the Diploma in Legal Studies programme for non-graduates**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a mechanism through which prior learning is identified, assessed and formally recognised by an educational institution within programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications. It enables individuals to receive appropriate recognition for relevant prior learning.

RPL supports EU objectives on widening access to qualifications and lifelong learning. In Ireland, QQI is responsible for establishing policies and criteria on access, transfer and progression (ATP). The applicable RPL framework is set out in the Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL (originally published by the NQAI) and in the Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Restatement (2015), with the aim of widening access to education and reducing duplication of learning, time and cost where prior learning is already held.

The benefits for learners are identified by the National RPL in Higher Education Project:

- RPL makes visible the valuable skills that people have acquired through work or other life experiences (for example, critical thinking and interpersonal skills). Valuing and recognising prior learning may significantly improve individuals' self-esteem and well-being.
- RPL enables individuals to access and participate in the higher education system. In so doing, it is a valuable tool in widening participation in higher education.
- RPL may reduce the amount of time and cost required to acquire a qualification or credential and can have a positive impact on student success.
- RPL supports the participation of learners of all ages in higher education, including older adults who may wish to pursue personal development and/or a 'second career'.

King's Inns recognises that knowledge, skills and competencies can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including formal, non-formal and informal. This is in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) goals which aim to recognise all learning achievements by supporting the development of

alternative pathways to qualifications (or awards) and by facilitating the recognition of prior learning.

King's Inns has operated a mature entry route to the Diploma in Legal Studies for many years. This new policy incorporates what formally was the mature entry route. It is anticipated that this new policy will enhance access to the programme for mature entrants and will permit King's Inns an increased level of flexibility in recognising prior learning undertaken by applicants to the Diploma programme, which may in turn permit them to access or complete the programme more efficiently.

Graduate applicants may also seek to rely on RPL if applicable.

- 7. Please provide details of King's Inns access initiatives at second and third level and the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives in 2025, and of new potential initiatives being considered. (Please see recommendation no 13 in Breaking Down Barriers report).**

**Second Level:**

King's Inns regularly facilitates pre-arranged tours of King's Inns by groups from secondary schools and other educational bodies other than third level. During 2025, a senior academic member of staff and another member of the team led three school tours and a tour for students of an Education and Training Board. Participants attended a talk on qualifying as a lawyer. Schools interested in attending a tour are advised to contact King's Inns directly.

King's Inns participates in the Bar of Ireland's highly successful Transition Year Programme. During 2025, a member of the King's Inns team carried out 4 tours of King's Inns with students on this programme (around 100 students in total).

King's Inns staff also attended a careers fair at one secondary school.

King's Inns has designed a pilot programme aimed at students at second level. This programme will involve a mixture of experiential learning and practical advice. King's Inns has contacted a number of local DEIS schools as part of phase 1 of this pilot programme. Once completed, King's Inns will seek feedback from the schools involved. If successful, King's Inns plans to expand the programme.

**Third Level:**

King's Inns engages in outreach with third level students in a number of different formats.

**Open Day**

King's Inns hosts an annual, in person open day, aimed at third level and mature students, interested in King's Inns programmes. This event is held on a Saturday to facilitate attendance by those based outside the Dublin area. Over the past two years, registrations and attendance at this event have been as follows:

|             | <b>REGISTERED</b> | <b>ATTENDED</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>2024</b> | 150               | 87              |
| <b>2025</b> | 345               | 160 (approx.)   |

### **“Be a Law Student for a Day”**

Additionally, the academic coordinator of the Diploma in Legal Studies runs an annual, online half-day event entitled “be a law student for a day”. During this event, participants learn about the Diploma in Legal Studies and attend online tutorials on different legal topics in small groups, allowing them to experience what learning is like at King’s Inns. This event is also held on a Saturday, to facilitate attendance by as many people as possible.

|             | <b>REGISTERED</b> | <b>ATTENDED</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>2021</b> | 239               | 131             |
| <b>2022</b> | 153               | 70              |
| <b>2023</b> | 84                | 38              |
| <b>2024</b> | 61                | 35              |
| <b>2025</b> | 101               | 43              |

### **Contact between Registrar and Third Level Institutions**

The Registrar is in regular contact with Law Schools, College Registrars, and the Law Society of Ireland and individual prospective students.

### **Presentations**

Each year, the Registrar makes presentations at events organised by Law Schools which have courses approved by King’s Inns for the Entrance Exam to the Barrister-at-Law Degree course. The Law Schools invite King’s Inns to these events to advise students of the routes of entry to King’s Inns and Call to the Bar, course requirements and entrance criteria.

The presentation is also addressed to students who do not fulfil the eligibility requirements to sit the Entrance Exam by way of missing a core required subject, or who may wish to avail of the Diploma course route to the Degree course and Call to the Bar. Institutions may invite King’s Inns to present at an event on its own or alongside the Law School of the Law Society. Where possible, the event includes a talk by a barrister practising in the courts or an employed barrister who is a former student of the King’s Inns. Presentations take place over a two-year cycle to the institutions listed on King’s Inns approved qualifications list.

During the academic years 2024/2025, the Registrar made presentations for the following institutions:

- Drogheda Institute of Further Education
- Maynooth University
- Queen’s University, Belfast
- University of Galway
- Atlantic Technological University, Donegal

- Trinity College Dublin
- South East Technological University, Carlow
- Technological University of the Shannon, Athlone
- Technological University Dublin

### **Careers Fairs**

With the support of the Bar of Ireland, and in collaboration with its University Outreach Coordinator and Education and Training Coordinator, King's Inns participated in several law career fairs during 2025. These events provide students with an opportunity to obtain information on careers in law and to engage directly with representatives from legal firms and professional bodies, including the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and King's Inns. Attendance on behalf of King's Inns was by either the Registrar or the Education Officer, both of whom have direct responsibility for programme applications and are well placed to address queries relating to access, entry and progression.

King's Inns staff attended these Law Career Fairs in 2025:

- University College Cork
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick
- Maynooth University
- Newbridge College

### **Bar of Ireland Internship**

In 2025, the Bar of Ireland launched a new internship programme for third level students. This programme included a tour of King's Inns, which was carried out by a member of the team.

### **Effectiveness and Impact**

Based on the material above, it can be seen that King's Inns is engaging effectively with a wide range of third level educational institutions across Ireland. Equally, there has been significant interest in open days and the "be a law student for a day event". In late 2025, an outreach survey was designed, which will be circulated to attendees following presentations, open days and other outreach initiatives. King's Inns will consider the available results later in 2026.

King's Inns has identified that additional outreach work needs to be carried out with schools, particularly DEIS schools, and is in the process of addressing this with its new pilot programme for secondary schools. The effectiveness of this initiative will be reviewed in late 2026.

8. Please provide details of any evaluation undertaken into the effectiveness of the King's Inns funded access programmes in 2025 and any proposals for their expansion (Please see recommendation no 14 in Breaking Down Barriers report).

King's Inns provides three funded access programmes. The goal in each case is, broadly, to assist students suffering from socio-economic disadvantage to undertake and successfully complete the course(s) of study required in order for them to train as a barrister.

#### **The Gaffney Scholarship**

The Maurice Gaffney Scholarship has been in place since 2017, consolidating a previous system whereby the Education Committee had the power to remit all or part of the course fees for a number of students per academic year on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage.

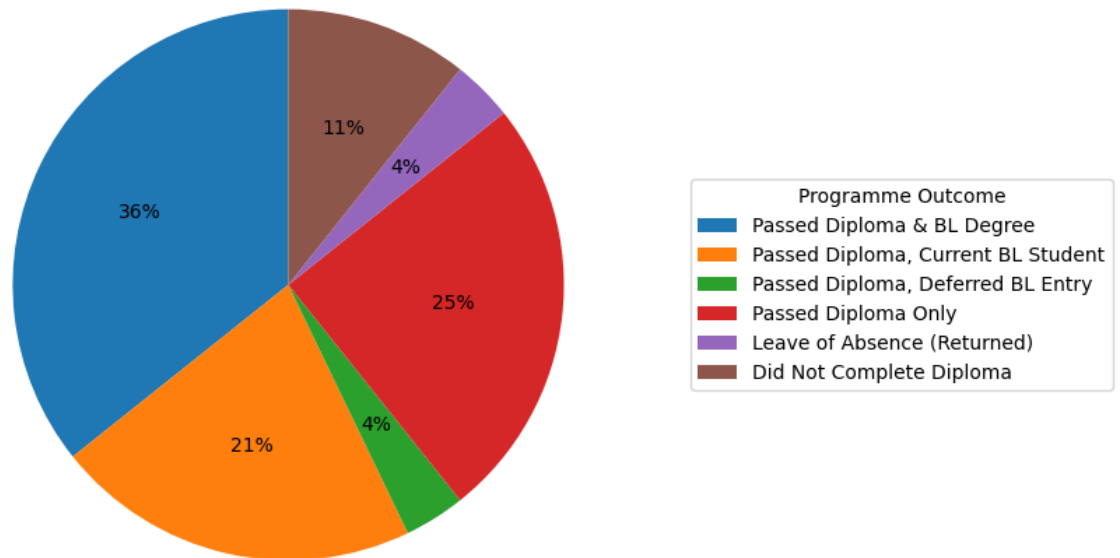
The Maurice Gaffney Scholarship provides that the Education Committee of King's Inns may remit course fees payable by students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who face exceptional hardship and wish to attend the Diploma in Legal Studies Course. As set out earlier in this report, the Diploma in Legal Studies represents an important pathway to completion of the academic phase of barrister training for both mature students and graduates of disciplines other than law. Supporting students to undertake this programme is therefore very important to King's Inns and, ultimately, to diversity in the profession in general.

The Scholarship consists of remission of the fees payable in whole or part thereof in both year 1 and year 2 of the Diploma in Legal Studies course and remission of fees for repeat assessments on course up to the limit of attempts permitted under the Education Rules of King's Inns.

Where a Gaffney Scholar elects to sit the Entrance Examination to the degree of Barrister-at-Law, the fee, or part thereof, for one attempt at that examination will be remitted.

The Diploma in Legal Studies is a two-year programme, therefore only those awarded a Gaffney Scholarship in or prior to 2023-2024 have had the time to complete the programme successfully. The completion rates for those awarded Gaffney Scholarships from the academic years 2020-21, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 are as follows:

## Gaffney Scholars – Programme Outcomes



Of the new Gaffney Scholars appointed in 2024-2025, all five progressed to year 2 of the programme. Of the four new Gaffney Scholars appointed in 2025-2026, all are current students on the programme.

### The McCarthy Bursary

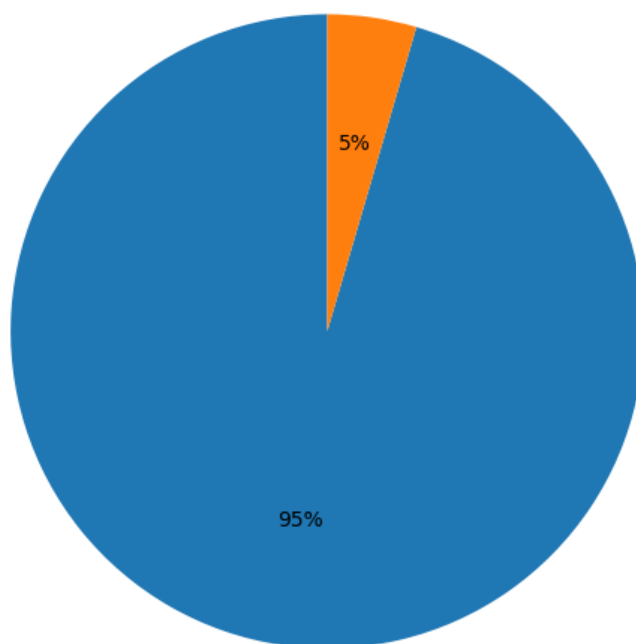
The McCarthy Bursary was launched in 2002.

The McCarthy Bursary aims to financially support one student who might not otherwise be able to take the degree of Barrister-at-Law course. The McCarthy Scholar is chosen from candidates who come from a background of difference and who are likely to have met and overcome a physical, social or financial challenge.

The bursary includes full remission of course fees, a contribution towards study-related costs, and a funded internship at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, together with travel and subsistence support.

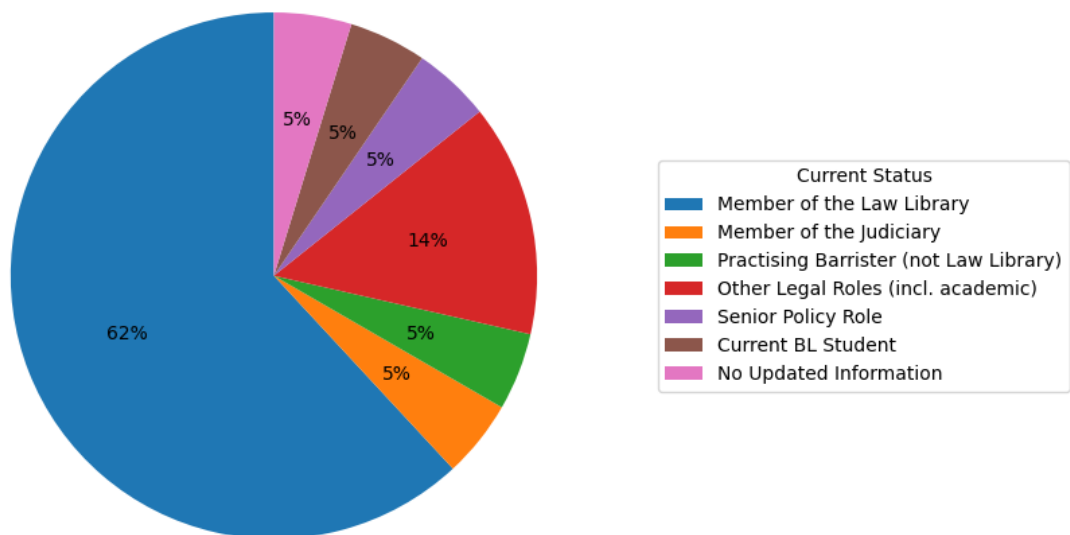
There have been 23 recipients of the McCarthy Bursary to date. Twenty-Two recipients successfully completed the Barrister-at-Law degree programme and one is a current student on that programme.

Programme Status of Fellows  
Current Student



Completed BL Degree

McCarthy Scholars - Current Professional Status



### **The Denham Fellowship**

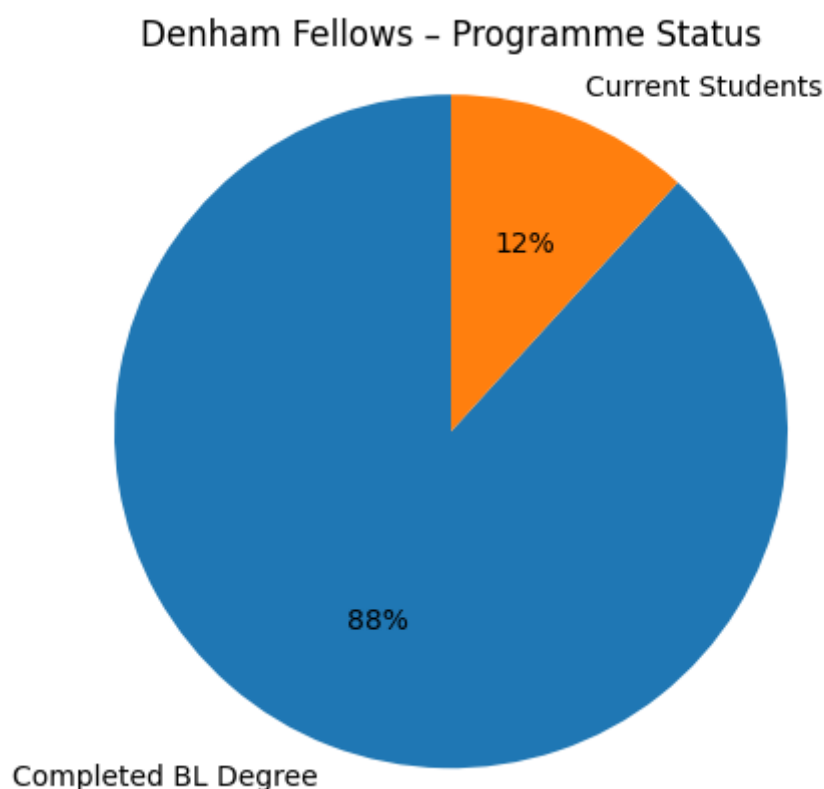
The Denham Fellowship was launched in 2017.

The Denham Fellowship is a funded access initiative jointly operated by the Bar of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns. It supports two prospective barristers each year from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to access professional legal education at King's Inns and to progress into professional practice at the Law Library.

The Fellowship provides structured financial, educational and professional support from entry to the Barrister-at-Law degree programme through the early years of practice. It is intended to promote diversity at the Bar and to complement existing access routes to third-level education by supporting progression from higher education into professional legal practice.

King's Inns remits the fees, including the entrance examination fees, of Denham Fellows. The Bar of Ireland pays Fellows an annual stipend of €7,000 for a period of five years beginning on commencement of the Barrister-at-Law degree programme at the King's Inns. The Bar of Ireland also organises valuable mentoring for Fellows.

The Fellowship has been very successful in assisting Fellows financially during their time at King's Inns. Thus far, there have been 17 Denham Fellows. Fifteen of those Fellows have successfully completed the Barrister-at-Law Degree programme. Two are current students at King's Inns.



There are no current proposals for expansion of the above programmes, unless additional funding becomes available.

**9. Please outline any changes to the admission policies of the King's Inns during 2025**

There were no changes made during 2025 other than the adoption of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy as detailed above.