



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 29 MARCH 2019

Bar Training

[Law Society Gazette](#), [The Times](#) – The legal media reports that traditions for would-be barristers, including mandatory ‘dining sessions’, will continue after the Bar Standards Board (BSB) said it recognises the ‘vital’ role played by the Inns of Court.

The BSB confirmed it signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) with the Inns last night, which includes new requirements for them to self-evaluate qualifying sessions for new entrants.

The Gazette reports that the Inns’ “influence had been threatened by the BSB’s proposed training overhaul, but representative body the Bar Council opposed the plans. The Bar Council lauded the Inns’ ‘fundamental role’ in ‘nurturing and developing the shared culture of the bar’.

“Subsequently, in a change of heart, the BSB said the Inns should retain their role but that there should be ‘greater BSB regulatory oversight and assurance’ in the process of calling to the Bar and administering fit and proper person checks. It has now outlined these proposals in the MoU.”

Disability at the Bar

[LexisNexis – Future of Law blog](#) - Faisal Sadiq, Chair of the Bar Council’s Disability Sub Group, blogs on the ongoing reforms to disability access, the unique difficulties facing the Bar, and the impact of inaccessibility on our justice system and society.

Faisal writes: “For the last decade, the Bar Council, the Bar Standards Board, and the Inns of Court have collectively sought to improve the diversity of the practising Bar. This is viewed both as an end in itself (it being accepted that the Bar ought to reflect the community from which we are drawn and that we seek to serve) as well it being understood that as the senior judiciary are still predominantly drawn from the Bar,

increased diversity at the Bar will have an impact on the make-up of the judiciary too.”

Faisel also points to specific work of the Bar Council and the wider Bar to make the profession more inclusive and ensure equal opportunities for those with disabilities.

Digital courts

The Times – The Times reports that the government’s drive towards digital courts has left lawyers concerned over the quality of some services and access to justice.

The Times points to recent court IT system failures, problems with an online probate system and a Times survey last year which showed that more than 80 per cent of surveyed barristers predicted that moves towards online courts will lead to “justice being trampled on” and “cheap”.

Bar Mock Trials

The Barrister – The Barrister reports that the coveted Bar Mock Trials National Champions title has gone to King Edward VI Handsworth School after its team won the Bar Council backed contest which sees non-fee paying schools compete against each other in mock court trials.

The competition, which includes real judges adjudicating the trials, also recognises individuals who impress in the competition. This year, Rebecca Lea of Runshaw College, Leyland, Lancashire, was presented with the individual advocacy award.

Richard Atkins QC said: “It is marvellous to see the dedication and commitment of the pupils taking part in this competition and that of their teachers. They have all worked so hard to reach the finals and it is a pity that there can only be one winner. I hope that the competition inspires many of those taking part to consider a career at the Bar. The Bar Council of England and Wales is proud to support the competition.”

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