

Role Description & Person Specification Inns' Qualifying Session External Observer

External Observers (EOs) are appointed by the Council of the Inns of Court (COIC) on behalf of the four Inns of Court (the Inns). EOs will provide constructive feedback regarding the provision of Qualifying Sessions (QS) with a view to identifying areas of best practice and areas for improvement. Feedback will form part of the Inns' annual 'Self-evaluation Report' which will be submitted to the Bar Standards Board (BSB).

The Inns of Court and Qualifying Sessions

QS form a vital part of a student's journey in training to become a barrister. All students who undertake vocational training for the Bar are required to be members of an Inn. QS, which take place alongside a student's vocational training, provide opportunities for professional and ethical development which complements and builds on a student's academic and vocational education and forms a bridge to the final component of Bar training; pupillage. QS also provide opportunities for a student to enhance their understanding of the role of barristers in the wider justice system and the rule of law.

The Inns believe quality to be vital to their educational provision. The QS is the mechanism by which the Inns deliver the bulk of their training to student barristers. It has developed over many years from something which was essentially a social occasion into something at which high quality education is delivered in a context where those learning are exposed to the Inns' community of practitioners and experts thereby reinforcing that learning.

The Role

EOs will be assigned to observe QS delivered by an Inn for a period of one academic year. At the end of each year EOs will rotate to observe the QS of a different Inn. The post is offered for an initial term of 3 years with possible renewal for a further 2 year term although consideration is being given to varying the length of initial appointments to produce staggered future handovers.

It is envisaged that the attendance requirement will be equivalent to 6 days over the course of each academic year. EOs will produce feedback reports after each QS event attended and an annual year-end report (templates will be provided). EOs will also meet with students to gather feedback on the QS programme as a whole.

Attendance will be required at an induction programme which will normally be held in either September or October in the first year of appointment. This initial induction programme will include sessions with all four EOs and individually with the Inn the EO is assigned to. In each subsequent year the EO will attend induction sessions at the new Inn they are assigned to.

Accountability

Accountable to: the Nominated Officer of COIC

Key Relationship: the Nominated Officer at the respective Inn

Role Description

- To be familiar with the Inn's most recent annual Self-evaluation Report, which will include previous EO annual reports and to be aware of actions taken in response to recommendations made.
- To be familiar with information provided by the Inn including the planned QS programme and learning outcomes.
- To attend a cross section of 4 QS events during each academic year as well as one weekend residential course.
- To submit a report to the Inn within 10 days of each observation.
- Towards the end of the academic cycle to chair a meeting of students; the aim being to identify whether the learning outcomes and students' expectations have been met and to gather general feedback. To report the feedback to the Inn.
- To submit by the end of June an end of year an EO annual report to the Inn. This report will inform the Self-evaluation Report which the respective Inn will submit annually to the Bar Standards Board.
- To provide feedback to COIC on the EO process.
- To meet the requirements and deadlines agreed with the Inn and to maintain open and regular communication with its nominated members of staff.
- To be aware of and be able to reference the four BSB principles underpinning Bar training and the components of the BSB Professional Statement.

Person Specification

The External Observer:

- is able to demonstrate a good understanding of quality assurance mechanisms;
- has direct experience of a profession where skills training is a key element of the operational workings;
- will comply with the Inns' and COIC rules relating to data protection;
- is able to maintain independence, identify and take appropriate action in dealing with conflicts of interest and maintain confidentiality where appropriate;
- can evidence, through personal and/or professional development, an understanding of the effects of unconscious bias;
- will not hold more than one other role as an EO or external examiner during the term of office;
- is willing and able to attend QS events during the evening and over the course of weekends in locations across the country.

Remuneration

EOs will receive an annual fee of £1,800 payable in three instalments:

- £600 upon completion of the induction programme;
- £600 after attendance at a residential event;
- £600 once the minimum number of QS have been observed, a meeting with students has been conducted, and all feedback reports and the annual report have been submitted.

It is estimated that on average EOs will attend 1 day of induction, 4 evening QS, a student meeting and a 2 ½ day residential weekend. We calculate this to be the equivalent of 6 days of attendance.

All reasonable travel and subsistence costs will be met in accordance with each Inn's policies. Ordinarily only standard class travel and budget accommodation will be reimbursed.