



Bar Standards Board  
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London  
WC1V 7HZ

Sent by email only to [policy@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk](mailto:policy@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk)

29 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Consultation on the future of the Bar Course Aptitude test (BCAT)**

The Legal Services Consumer Panel (Panel) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Bar Standards Board (BSB) consultation paper on the future of the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT).

The Panel has carefully considered the evidence and analysis presented by the BSB on whether the BCAT should continue in its current guise. We find the evidence for its abolition compelling.

The BCAT was introduced to filter out students who may not have the requisite aptitude to succeed in the Bar training course. However, the BSB's post implementation monitoring, and evaluation reports show that the BCAT is not an effective filter for aptitude for entry to the Bar training course (BTC). This is evidenced by two evaluation reports and supported by an independent research report which corroborates the evaluation findings.

The Panel is also convinced by the argument that recent reforms of the Bar training, and in particular, the onus on course providers to introduce robust admission requirements, is more likely to filter out students who are less likely to succeed on the Bar training course. We would like to emphasize, however, that any filtering process should be carefully designed, and monitored, to ensure applicants from any particular social background are not unfairly excluded.

The Panel is also convinced by the argument that the BTC adds an extra layer of cost to barristers' training, a needless cost which can negatively affect access to the profession. Moreover, it poses another hurdle to students who are arguably suitably stretched. It may be helpful for regulators to proactively share best practices relating

to enrolment or any filtering process used to reduce failure rates in order to improve consistency and ensure equality of access.

Finally, we respect the role of the regulator to implement a policy designed to address a mischief, then monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. And where necessary adjust the policy should the evidence warrant it. In our view, the BSB has undertaken such an exercise and the evidence justifies the proposal to withdraw the BCAT.

On reflection, this evaluation could have been carried out sooner, considering there were early signs that this assessment was not delivering on expected outcome. That said, we appreciate the mammoth work and investment that went into the Bar training review which may have been necessary before the final decision on the BCAT.

Once more the Panel welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation, if you have any questions pertaining to the Panel's response, please contact Lola Bello Legal Services Consumer Panel Manager in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S Chambers".

Sarah Chambers  
Chair  
Legal Services Consumer Panel