

Correspondence (COR)

COR001

From: [REDACTED] <education@innertemple.org.uk>
Date: Wed 11/06/2025 14:17
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Time extension to complete bar course

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email.

It may be possible to extend the time frame by making an application to the BSB. The rules and applications can be found on their website below:

https://linklock.titanhq.com/analyse?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.barstandardsboard.org.uk%2Ftraining-qualification%2Fbarrister-training-waivers-and-exemptions.html&data=eJxsyt1KwzAUAOcNaS-EhK1ZuwSsWDd7MwTx5wFOkrMtrPnxJLX69iKlIHj9fabfbvGoINBMNUgyjVhrphE7djTYqWyNMLKrbX9V-56eJaPTyv5cKfWqm1bJfdS7tqdbES3Hff3nVCiG4bbP43jTInsSvJE0fl4lynGCzfR39S5P7zA5xSp2qxcCEgFtZqQRzrx-VJTf3hNZ_D_69yfS0m5EkPVjFUzLsvCNVAuECyQzToC2Z9cNWMhcMGFE3ubYXJHZ6C4GKpm1EDkckFiv2UB946UGQTL8AN9-q6Zn4ufvgjAAP__ftBIOA%%

[REDACTED]

Kind regards,

Ticket URL: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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The contents of this message and any associated files do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Wed 04/06/2025 16:19
To: education@innertemple.org.uk <education@innertemple.org.uk>
Subject: Time extension to complete bar course

Dear Education Team,

I hope you are well. I am writing to enquire about a potential extension to the 5 year limit to complete the bar course. I believe my five years is due to expire in September.

I started the Bar Vocational Studies course at City St Georges in September 2020 and have successfully completed 7 of 10 modules first time [REDACTED]. For numerous reasons outside my control (including disability, health, [REDACTED]), I have had to repeatedly defer the remaining 3 leaving me one opportunity to sit them this summer before the 5 years runs out.

Unfortunately, I am currently unsure if I am even going to be able to sit them this summer [REDACTED]. I am determined to complete the bar course but being realistic may need additional time to do so without jeopardising my health/wellbeing further. I was awarded an Exhibition Award by Inner Temple as well as a partial fee waiver scholarship by City Law School for the bar course, and do not want them to go to waste.

[REDACTED]

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you can assist. Thank you.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
To: [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Date: Thu 12/06/2025 11:47
Subject: FW: Extension to complete BVS

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email, to which [REDACTED] has requested I respond.

I am sorry to hear of the challenges you have encountered whilst undertaking the BVS.

The time limit to complete the programme is specified by the Bar Standards Board, the professional body which regulates Bar training. They have very recently issued further clarification about the requirement as this summer marks 5 years since the current Bar training requirements were implemented and therefore the first point at which any student could reach the time limit. (We will shortly be communicating this clarification to all relevant students.)

Their clarified wording is as follows:

"Candidates studying the vocational component must pass assessments in all subjects within five years of the date of enrolment in order to be called to the Bar.

For this purpose, the five years will commence from the month in which the course starts and ends on the last day of the relevant month five years later. Specifically, if an AETO commences its Bar course (i.e., commences classes or makes materials available to its students) in the month of September 2020, the candidate must have completed their last assessment in the month of August 2025 (even if their results are not received before the end of August 2025). This time limit applies to both full-time and part-time candidates. The maximum time limit exists to avoid graduates proceeding to pupillage with "stale" knowledge. This period cannot be extended under any circumstances (for example candidates cannot apply for waivers or extenuating circumstances to extend the five-year period.)"

As you will see from the final line, unfortunately we have no discretion to extend this period, nor do the BSB themselves. That does mean that this summer will be your last opportunity to take your remaining assessments. I note what you say about feeling unable to take the assessments at the present time. All I can suggest is that, if you do want to go ahead and try to take the assessments, you get in touch with our Student Welfare Officer, [REDACTED] (cls.support@citystgeorges.ac.uk) to explore whether there is any support we can provide or direct you to externally which might help you to take the assessments. You could also contact our Student Engagement Officer, [REDACTED] (cls.learningsupport@citystgeorges.ac.uk) to review your Student Support Plan and whether there are any changes which we could make to your reasonable adjustments in order to assist.

I am sorry to provide such disappointing news.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The City Law School
City St George's, University of London
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB
T: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
www.citystgeorges.ac.uk

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NOTE: the below email may be the redacted email at CSG FOI 008

From: [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 11:47:29 AM
To: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Subject: Extension to complete BVS

Dear [REDACTED],

I hope you are well and apologise if you are not the relevant contact - I was previously in touch with [REDACTED]. I am emailing to find out about extending the 5 year limit to complete the Bar Vocational Studies course. This is quite urgent - I believe my 5 years expire in September, and I am due to sit assessments in July and August but do not think I am fit to. I am unsure what to do about any of this given my unusual position.

I started the Bar Vocational Studies course in September 2020 and successfully completed 7 of 10 modules first time [REDACTED]. For numerous reasons outside my control (including disability, health, [REDACTED]), I have had to repeatedly defer the remaining 3 leaving me one opportunity to sit them this summer before the 5 years runs out.

Unfortunately, I do not think I am fit to sit them this summer [REDACTED]. I am determined to complete the bar course but being realistic need additional time to do so without jeopardising my health/wellbeing further. I was awarded an Exhibition Award by Inner Temple as well as a partial fee waiver scholarship by City Law School for the bar course, and do not want them to go to waste.

I understand that the Inns of Court dictate the 5 year deadline to complete - I contacted Inner Temple last week enquiring about an extension and am waiting for a reply.

[REDACTED]

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Date: Thu 03/07/2025 16:43

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Extension to complete vocational component

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email. As set out in the Curriculum and Assessment Strategy (see below), the current position is that the vocational component of training must be completed within five years.

The Curriculum and Assessment Strategy states the following:

"Candidates studying the vocational component must pass assessments in all subjects within five years of the date of enrolment in order to be called to the Bar. The BSB stipulates only that completion must be within five years; we do not stipulate the maximum number of attempts that a candidate may be allowed within those five years."

Should the abovementioned position change, we will be in further touch. In any event we recommend that you sit any forthcoming exams prior to the expiry of the five-year period.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Bar Standards Board

289-293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ (DX:240 LDE)

authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk

www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

AUTHORISATIONS TEAM SERVICE UPDATE PAGE - for the latest updates on our application processing/response times

AETO TRANSITION FOR EXISTING PUPILLAGE PROVIDERS

We are environmentally friendly and no longer issue hard-copy decision letters or certificates unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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From: [REDACTED]

Date: Sun 29/06/2025 17:49

To: authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk <authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk>

Subject: Extension to complete vocational component

Dear Authorisations Team,

I am a Bar Vocational Studies student at City St George's University of London. I started in September 2020 so my five years to complete to be eligible for Call to the Bar expires in September. I'm due to sit exams in July/August but I do not think I will be able to.

Is it possible to extend the five years to complete the vocational component of bar training?

This is required primarily due to multiple disabilities/health problems (including [REDACTED]). I have been unable to find the information on the website, and received conflicting information from my Inn and university. I have already successfully completed 70% of the vocational component.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Wed 11/06/2025 16:20

To: authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk <authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk>

Subject: Extension to complete vocational component

Dear Authorisations Team

I hope you are well. I am enquiring urgently regarding extending the five year time limit to complete the vocational component.

I've received conflicting information, my course provider directed me to my Inn of Court, my Inn of Court directed me to the BSB website. I have been unable to find the information on the relevant rule and application on the BSB website and wondered if you could please point me in the right direction.

I started the Bar Vocational Studies course at City University in September 2020 and was due to sit exams in July and August this year before the 5 years runs out this September. [REDACTED] I am not fit to sit these exams and would like to get an extension. I have already sat and passed 70% of the course.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

COR004

From: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Date: Tue 28/10/2025 10:38

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for contacting the Authorisations department. I have passed on your complaint to the Head of Authorisations who shall be in contact in due course.

Thank you for your patience.

Kind regards,
Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ (DX: 240 LDE)
Tel: [REDACTED]

authorisations@barstandardsboard.org.uk
www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

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From: [REDACTED]

Date: Fri 17/10/2025 16:49

To: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear Authorisations Team

Please see the forwarded email below - I understand from [REDACTED]'s automatic reply that he no longer works for the BSB.

Thank you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Tue 17/10/2025 16:40

To: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED]

I would like to make a complaint please as my concerns have not been addressed and I believe the Bar Standards Board's actions are unlawful, contrary to Sch.4 the Legal Services Act 2007 and principles of public law, in its prohibition of extensions i.e. exemptions to the five year rule to complete the vocational component. It is clear the BSB is not going to do anything until official results are released which is especially unfair given the proximity to the next sittings of the centrally set assessments. I have been strung along for months to the detriment of my health and wellbeing which could have been avoided entirely had the BSB not prohibited extensions.

Per my email of 7 August 2025, the five year rule has been inadequately communicated, and the prohibition of exemption from it has not been publicly communicated whatsoever. In fact, neither the BSB nor City St George's University of London have been able to evidence it. The regulatory arrangements do not provide for: a blanket ban on exemptions from the five year limit to complete the vocational component; delegation of any decision-making to AETOs in respect of applications for exemption from it; any requirement that AETOs provide initial assessment as to a student's eligibility for exemption from it; a requirement that individuals' extenuating circumstances are disclosed prior to making an application; amendments to the requirements of applications for extension set out at rQ11 except to prescribe the form in which they should be made.

The regulatory arrangements already permit students to make applications for exemption from the five year rule (rQ7-12 Section B2 Part 4 of the BSB Handbook). Under these rules the BSB has the discretionary power to grant full or partial exemptions in respect of the vocational component requirements (at rQ3.2) and all applications made under these provisions must be considered (subject to rQ11). These rules set out the process for making applications for exemption and for deciding whether to grant them.

Rule Q11 sets out the requirements for an application for exemption made under Section B2 including that it "must be in such form as may be prescribed by the BSB". Applications for exemption from the five year rule to complete the vocational component are therefore permitted, whether or not the BSB has prescribed a form in which it should be made (rQ11). There is no prescribed form specific to the five year rule so either an application does not have to be in a prescribed form, or it must be made in the prescribed form for general exemption/waiver. Section B2 (rQ7-12) does not provide for AETOs to make any decision in respect of applications for exemption made under it, nor does Section B4 (rQ35-40) provide for AETOs to review any such decision (which is limited to the BSB, Inns of Court, and ICC).

Additionally, the BSB's discretionary power under rQ12 (s.B2) is to "make any further enquiries or require the applicant to provide any further information that it considers relevant". This power only applies once an application has been made and before it has been decided. The BSB therefore does not have the power to require disclosure of individuals' extenuating circumstances until the individuals in question make an application. I would like to reiterate that at this point, I still do not consent to any of my data being shared between City St George's and the BSB for the purposes of exemption. [REDACTED]

I believe that the BSB's prohibition on exemptions from the five year rule amounts to alteration of its regulatory arrangements contrary to Schedule 4 of the Legal Services Act 2007. Per Sch.4 alterations to regulatory arrangements require approval or exemption by the Legal Services Board. An application for approval would require an impact assessment which I raised in my aforementioned email (albeit specifically an Equality Impact Assessment). In the absence of approval or exemption, alterations do not take legal effect. The prohibition on exemption from the five year rule is therefore ineffective. Unfortunately, I do not have £590 to take the risk of making an application which the BSB insists is not permitted.

I attach information (from internal CSG communications) disclosed by CSG under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which supports my concerns and, given the exemptions for previous cohorts, undermines the BSB's basis for prohibiting exemption for cohorts since i.e. preventing stale knowledge. CSG withheld disclosure of correspondence with the BSB under the s.41(1) confidentiality exemption. I am awaiting the outcome of CSG's internal review which has been delayed by CSG consulting the ICO. I am prepared to go to tribunal to elicit disclosure.

I am deeply disappointed in the Bar Standards Board's treatment of students. I have been through enough this year; I did not need the stress of what is an entirely avoidable and unfair situation.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Date: Wed 03/09/2025 10:55

To: [REDACTED]

CC: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED]

I am well thank you, and hope you are too.

I am sorry for not replying sooner, and please let me provide an update for you.

In terms of the 5-year rule, our position on this is unchanged in that this rule still remains in place. We have not issued any communications to the contrary on this matter, but we have made this clear to all AETOs, having issued communications regarding this.

We are, however, finalising the policy and guidance for which, we, working with AETOs, are envisaging we use for requests for extensions in exceptional circumstances. We are aiming to issue further guidance shortly, but in the meantime, we are looking at all requests that have been made to the Bar Standards Board directly, and those made via the AETOs, so that we can reach decisions that are fair, equitable and based on sufficient evidence that satisfy our regulatory rules. In respect of our decisions, we envisage treating each application individually, and on its own merits, and that would include looking at all the evidence provided at the point of application / request.

I hope that provides you with some comfort, and that we will be aiming to respond to applicants in the very near future so that they can plan their next steps.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn, London WC1V 7HZ

Direct Line: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: Tue 02/09/2025 14:17
To: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>
CC: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>
Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED],

I hope you are well. I have not received any response to my previous email, please could you update me?

Unfortunately, I was unable to sit my outstanding exams. My AETO has not given any indication as to the position on extensions since your email either. Given my cohort's five year period has now expired, it is most unfair to keep us in the dark.

I am growing increasingly concerned by the manner in which the BSB is handling this. The BSB has not made any of this public knowledge - students who have not made enquiries to the BSB/AETOs will be completely unaware that the BSB is even considering what, if anything, may constitute appropriate circumstances for extension. This also denies students as a collective the opportunity to be heard on the matter.

Additionally, it sounds as if the BSB's assessment of what may be appropriate circumstances will be made based on the circumstances already presented to it by AETOs/students, as opposed to pre-determining criteria and then applying them to individual cases.

None of this is transparent, fair, or consistent.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Thu 07/08/2025 17:21
To: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>
CC: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>
Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. I apologise in advance for the length of my email, but I have a number of concerns which will impact many students.

The regulations

Please could you confirm whether the existing regulations provide for this discretionary power to grant extensions to the five-year rule, or will changes to the regulations be required? I am uncertain but assume that rule Q7 (Part 4 B2 BSB Handbook) confers this.

The Bar Standards Board's timing

I would like to express my disappointment that the Bar Standards Board is only now considering the position on extensions to the five year limit, two weeks before my cohort's final sit of the centralised assessments, approximately four weeks before our time limit expires, and in light of the ongoing Authorisations processing delays. It is concerning that this is being considered so late in the day bearing in mind the September 2020 cohort is the first to reach expiry and were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic more than any other cohort. It feels as if we are the cohort that has been left to slip through the cracks.

Given the Authorisations delays, it is likely that my cohort's five years will expire before extension applications are decided, leaving students in limbo. According to the BSB website, Authorisations applications are taking around 16 weeks to process from the date the BSB has received all documentation and fee payment. This will likely lead to students who require extension and to sit any of the centralised assessments missing out on the December 2025 sit. Additionally, the short time frame will make it difficult/impossible for many students, myself included, to raise the money for an application fee which is, at this point, unknown. The general waiver/exemption fee of £590 would be unaffordable for me.

Has the BSB considered the potential issues with timeframe and fees?

Communication of the five-year rule

My experience has been that the five-year rule has been poorly communicated (especially considering its absoluteness leading to confusion not only amongst students but also the AETOs and Inns, from whom I have received conflicting information. I understand that the BSB recently clarified the rule to AETOs. Even the BSB Authorisations Team have had difficulty with the rule, and were unable to tell me whether extensions were possible or the rule's location when I called on 3 July 2025.

The five-year rule to complete the vocational component has inexplicably not been communicated with the same clarity, transparency, consistency, or accessibility as other bar training time limits. To my knowledge, it is the only bar training time limit which is absolute with no possibility of extension (assuming the position does not change). Despite its absoluteness, it is disproportionately difficult to locate.

The Bar Qualification Manual does not mention the five-year limit to complete the vocational component at all, despite citing the time limits for:

- a) completion of the academic component;
- b) commencement of the vocational component;
- c) commencement of the pupillage/work-based component; and
- d) completion of the pupillage/work-based component.

The five-year rule is solely located in the Curriculum and Assessment Strategy document which is repeatedly described in terms which imply its primary purpose is for AETOs in understanding their obligations - not an intuitive location at all for students. Even its location within that document is illogical and inconsistent with the others. To illustrate:

- Commencement of the vocational component - at the end of the academic component section, immediately prior to the vocational component section;
- Commencement of the pupillage/work-based component - at the start of the pupillage/work-based component section;
- Completion of the vocational component - not in the vocational component section at all, but after the pupillage/work-based component section, in the "General Assessment Requirements" section.

As far as I can tell, it has not been explicitly stated anywhere in the BSB Handbook, Bar Qualification Manual, or Authorisation Framework (or any other publicly available information) that extensions to the five

year rule are not permitted. This would be a reasonable and responsible thing to communicate about an absolute rule, even more so given the overlap with the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, it has been communicated poorly through the AETOs. Despite being integral to eligibility for call to the Bar, the rule has not been communicated whatsoever by my Inn of Court, including in any of the documentation for applications for call. My Inn suggested extensions were at least possible when I enquired in June 2025. My AETO has given multiple interpretations including expressly stating in this academic year's Programme Handbook that students may apply for discretionary extensions from the BSB.

The five-year rule is not explained or justified as the other time limits are. Students are being held to an absolute rule without full transparency. The lack of clarity surrounding the rule's interpretation is clearly not isolated to or the fault of students but ultimately, students will bear the brunt of it.

How will the BSB address the issues with communication of the rule?

AETO involvement in assessing eligibility for extensions

I am not entirely clear on the exact proposed role of AETOs from your email. At one point it is suggested they will provide a mandatory initial eligibility assessment, but they are later referred to as providing support and supplementary information only.

Nevertheless, I am deeply concerned by any suggestion that AETOs should be mandatorily involved in giving any assessment (including preliminary) of eligibility for extension as opposed to providing supporting/supplementary information. I cannot see that this complies with or is provided for by the existing regulations relating to exemptions/waivers (rQ7-12 Part 4 B2 BSB Handbook). By extension, I do not believe there is provision for review/appeal of such assessments by AETOs either (rQ35-40 Part 4 B4 BSB Handbook).

Additionally, AETOs lack the necessary impartiality, having financial and commercial interests in whether students are granted extensions, e.g. resit fees, the impact of course pass rates, potential costs of retaining extending students. The proposed approach of AETOs conducting initial assessments as to eligibility has high potential to prejudice students, particularly those requiring extension at least in part because of their AETO (for which there may be many possible reasons).

It will also reinforce the power imbalance between students and AETOs, particularly where the relationship has been compromised or has broken down entirely. Students who have had negative (and/or unlawful) experiences with their AETO, will likely be dissuaded from applying for extension, especially where trust has been broken. Similarly, it may dissuade students who require an extension from pursuing complaints or legal action against their AETO.

Finally, it is unfair to immediately require students give consent for sharing their request details with AETOs for a process which is, at present, entirely hypothetical. Students coming up to expiry are in an incredibly vulnerable position, many will be desperate, and have a lot at stake personally, professionally, and financially. The time pressure alone risks students making decisions which may not be in their best interests. For the purposes of transparency and accountability, students should not be required to do or share anything without being fully informed as to

a) The precise role of AETOs and, if relevant, the provisions which allow this.

b) The process for applications and their assessment including for example:

a. Eligibility/assessment criteria.

b. Fees.

Including whether any fee requirement can be removed given the timeframe.

c. Review/appeal (or any other protections for students)

Including whether the BSB will assume responsibility for AETO assessments and treat them as BSB decisions for the purposes of review/appeal.

d. Timescales

e. The weight given to any AETO-provided assessment/information.

f. The relevant regulations.

c) Related practical issues e.g.:

- a. Whether AETOs will be required to keep extending students on. (If not, students are not guaranteed a place elsewhere and may be forced to pay through the nose at another AETO or in the resit scheme)
- b. Where relevant, the reasoning for departing from usual BSB processes for similar applications e.g. stale qualifications, exemptions, waivers.

Disabled students

Per the BSB's own data, disabled students are less likely to complete the vocational component. The reasons are to date unclear, but it has not been ruled out that AETOs themselves may be a contributing factor. The bar course was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with my cohort's five years spanning all but the first six months, more than any other cohort. Disabled people more widely were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, access to healthcare including assessment, diagnosis, and treatment in respect of health conditions/disabilities was and continues to be impacted, with significant waiting lists and service cuts. It is fair to assume that disabled students will be more likely to require extension.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of the five-year rule been undertaken since it was implemented?

The Inns of Court

As I understand it, the Inns will terminate student membership if the vocational component is not completed within five years and students have not successfully applied to their Inn for extension of membership. This is something many students will be unaware of, but also, given the short timeframe between now and my cohort's expiry, could result in an influx of applications for membership extension to the Inns.

Should the Inns be unable to process such applications quickly enough and membership lapses, students would no longer be eligible to be on the bar course or to sit further assessments. This will cause further delay and cost for students who need to reapply for Inn membership (where BSB extensions to the five years are eventually granted). Additionally, Qualifying Sessions expire after five years which will require students to re-do at least some of their Qualifying Sessions, potentially increasing cost and delay to students.

How does the BSB propose to address the potential issues with Inn membership and Qualifying Sessions?

My position

I still wish to seek an extension (and would provide full details therein). However, based on the information provided and the concerns I have, which also highlight conflict with the principles to which the BSB must have regard in its regulatory activities (transparency, accountability, proportionality, consistency, and targeting), I cannot consent to my request details being shared with my AETO at this point.

From my perspective as a disabled student, it would be fairer, provide a degree of certainty, and prevent the potential administrative bottlenecks to automatically grant my cohort (September 2020 start) an extension to the end of the calendar year i.e. 31 December 2025, including Inn membership and Qualifying Session validity.

This would benefit students, AETOs, the Inns, and the BSB, without compromising the qualification and putting the public at risk. Students would have more time to complete and/or ensure they can make (and pay for) a strong application for extension. It would enable students (like me) to not have to jeopardise their health further by sitting exams before September.

It would enable the BSB to devise and implement a satisfactory process for extensions. AETOs would be able to prepare for their students applying for and being granted extensions, amend their academic

regulations/course documentation, and even potentially provide additional sittings of non-centralised assessments to enable completion by the end of 2025. The Inns would not face an almost immediate influx of membership extension applications and would be able to prepare for those anticipated near the end of the year.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Date: Mon 04/08/2025 17:06

To: [REDACTED]

CC: authorisations <authorisations@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk>

Subject: Vocational Bar Training - application to the Bar Standards Board for an extension to the "five-year rule"

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your recent correspondence with the Bar Standards Board, in which you have requested an extension to (or raised questions about) the five-year deadline for completing the vocational component of Bar training (the "Five-year Rule").

We have been considering this matter in light of student requests, as well as from representations by the Approved Education and Training Organisations (AETO), who deliver Bar Training.

Our view is that there **may** be very limited and exceptional circumstances in which an extension to the five years may be permitted and are appropriate, and we are currently reviewing the circumstances in which this **might** arise.

We are currently in touch with AETOs and have requested that they share with us the details of any requests that have been made with them directly.

It is likely that we will require AETOs to provide an initial assessment as to a student's eligibility for an extension. Therefore, if you are still wishing to proceed with your request, we will require your written permission to inform your AETO of your request to us. **You can do so by replying to this email, stating that you are providing your consent for the Bar Standards Board to pass your request details to your AETO.**

We will only share the details that you have already provided to us, for them to support you during the process, and should any further information be required. This will enable us to gather the full picture, and consider permitting, or rejecting, an extension in each case.

We are sympathetic that this is no doubt a stressful time for those students that find themselves in a position of not being able to complete the vocational component within five-years. However, we do not wish to raise hopes or expectations any student will automatically receive an extension to the current deadline; rather requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and if any extension is granted, as mentioned above, this will be in exceptional and limited circumstances.

We aim to let you know of our decision as soon as possible, but in the meantime, if you have any questions, please let me know

Thanking you in advance,

Kind regards,

COR004

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Bar Standards Board

289-293 High Holborn, London WC1V 7HZ

Direct Line: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@BarStandardsBoard.org.uk

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From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Date: Fri 31/10/2025 15:45
To: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>; [REDACTED]
Subject: Time limit for completion of BVS assessments - expired

Dear [REDACTED]

As you will already be aware, you are required (as stipulated by our programme regulations and as determined by the Bar Standards Board) to complete all assessments within five years of your commencement of the programme. As you commenced the programme in September 2020, the implication therefore is that you were required to complete all assessments by September 2025. As such, the Summer 2025 assessment period represented the last assessment period in which you could sit assessments.

As matters stand, this time limit for completion of assessments cannot be extended under any circumstances; you are therefore classified as having failed the programme and are not permitted to undertake any further assessments.

Should it be the case that the Bar Standards Board implement any amendment to the time limit for completion of assessments such that you are then permitted to sit assessments again, we will inform you accordingly.

I can also confirm that, should it transpire that you are ultimately permitted to sit assessments after September 2025, we will automatically set aside your most recent attempts at the Criminal Litigation and Civil Litigation assessments (i.e. those of August 2025). So there is no requirement that you follow the appeals procedure.

Please note that the above action will be taken only in respect of the Summer 2025 assessments (in recognition of the uncertainty and potential disruption generated by the five-year deadline for completion) and not in respect of any other attempts.

At this obviously very difficult time, I also wish to draw your attention again to the support services available to you (as set out in the final section of the guidance email sent on 30 October).

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
The City Law School
City St George's, University of London
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB
www.citystgeorges.ac.uk

[REDACTED]

COR006

From: cls-pg-assessments <cls-pg-assessments@citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Date: Fri 06/03/2026 16:42
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
CC: [REDACTED]
Subject: BSB Update on Five-Year Rule Extensions

Dear [REDACTED]

I'm afraid the BSB has still not come to a final decision on this. As soon as we hear anything we will let you know.

[REDACTED]

Thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk
Date: Fri 06/03/2026 13:35
To: cls-pg-assessments <cls-pg-assessments@citystgeorges.ac.uk>
CC: [REDACTED]
Subject: BSB Update on Five-Year Rule Extensions

Dear [REDACTED]

Please could you provide an update on this?

[REDACTED]

Thank you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: cls-pg-assessments <cls-pg-assessments@citystgeorges.ac.uk>
Date: Tue 16/12/2025 11:47
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]citystgeorges.ac.uk>
CC: [REDACTED]
Subject: BSB Update on Five-Year Rule Extensions

Dear [REDACTED]

I am aware that you were withdrawn at the October Assessment Board due to being at the 5-year time limit for the BVS. There has now been an announcement from the Bar Standards Board regarding the time limit:

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) and Authorised Education and Training Organisations (AETOs) are working together to develop a process for considering potential extensions to the five-year time limit. Further development work will continue in early 2026.

Any extension will likely only be considered in genuinely exceptional circumstances beyond a student's control that prevented timely completion.

Individual circumstances are not being considered at this stage. Further information will be provided once the process has been finalised. Students should only contact their AETO if necessary; they will be redirected if they contact the BSB.

If you pass (or have already passed) the five-year time limit while the process is being developed, you won't be excluded from future consideration solely because you've reached the time limit. However, this does not indicate or guarantee that you will be considered for an extension or receive one. This will depend on the final agreed-upon process.

Once we have final information on the process we will be in touch to let you know how this may affect you, and whether you will be in a position to continue with the programme. Please bear with us for now.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The City Law School
City St George's, University of London
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www.city.ac.uk

[REDACTED]