# Steps to becoming a Barrister in Queensland

To become a barrister and practise at the Private Bar, you must first be eligible to undertake the Bar Exam and the Bar Practice Course (BPC). The prerequisites for the Bar Exam and the BPC are the completion of a recognised law degree, practical legal training, and admission to the legal profession. Please refer to the overview of these prerequisites on our website.

## Steps to becoming a Barrister

1. **Information session (Pre-Bar Exam):**

   A recording of the information session for prospective Bar Exam applicants is available on our website. It outlines key considerations including exam preparation, the BPC, working with mentors, securing chambers, fulfilling readership obligations, and bookkeeping. Additionally, consider your financial position and when to notify your employer of your intention to leave.

2. **Submit your application for the Bar Exam:**

   The Bar Exam includes three components:

   1. Evidence,
   2. Practice and Procedure, and
   3. Legal Ethics.

   The Bar Exam is held twice per year, with all components undertaken on the same day.

   To prepare for the exam, the Association provides a reading list in the *Information for Applicants Handbook*. Materials are available at the Supreme Court Library of Queensland, free of charge. The cost and application deadline for the Bar Exam can also be found in the handbook.

3. **Post Exam (0-3 Months prior to the BPC):**

   Approximately 3 months prior to the BPC, offers are made to all applicants who passed the exam. Payment for the course must be made within seven days of receiving your course offer.

   Electronic course materials will be provided prior to and during the course.

4. **Before accepting the BPC offer, applicants should consider the following:**

   a. **Living expenses -** Ensure you have sufficient savings to cover living expenses during the six-week course and potentially a few weeks after.

   b. **Current employment -** Deciding when and how to take leave or resign is entirely your decision; the Association offers no guidance in this regard other than to say that some applicants find it helpful to take the week before the BPC off to prepare.

   c. **Secure mentors –** Agreeing your Senior and Junior mentors early is important. Using tools such as Doyles Guide and the Association's 'Find a Barrister' function on our website will help you with identifying barristers working in your preferred areas of practice.

   d. **Start your network -** Reach out to contacts in the profession and attend networking events. Having an idea of your practice area(s) is helpful.

   e. **Attend Pre-course Information Sessions –** these sessions include topics such as applying for a practising certificate and setting up your practice.

5. **Post BPC, making your practising certificate application (you may need to consider some of these items during the BPC if you wish to commence practising immediately after the course):**

   a. **Refer to the checklist at the end of the Application Form for a practising certificate -** Start gathering required documents.

   b. **Request Certificates of Fitness -** Based on your legal practising history, certificates may be required from the Legal Services Commission, Queensland Law Society and/or other jurisdictions. Please refer to the provider for cost.

c. **Cancel Solicitor's practising certificate -** If transitioning directly to the Bar, cancel your solicitor's practising certificate and include confirmation in your application for a barrister's practising certificate.

d. **Obtain Professional Indemnity Insurance –** Refer to the Association's approved providers on our website. Premiums will vary, refer to the different providers for details.

e. **Submit Practising Certificate & Association Membership Application (after you receive your BPC certificate) -** Submit your application to: legal@qldbar.asn.au. Membership is encouraged but not compulsory. Refer to our website for membership fees and Practising Certificate fees.

## After receiving your practising certificate

6. **Before you commence practising, you should:**

a. **Register for ABN & GST -** Review ATO requirements and consider seeking financial advice.

b. **Set up professional email -** BarWeb email setup is available post-certification (unless provided by chambers). Please contact BarWeb directly for cost:

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|---|---|
| Website: | https://barweb.net.au |
| Phone: | 07 3292 0222 |
| Email: | support@barweb.com.au |

c. **Apply for a Court ID –** the ID allows members of the profession to bypass court security. Apply via your MyBAQ login (which will be issued upon the granting of your practising certificate).

d. **Access Supreme Court Library -** New barristers have access to the Virtual Legal Library. Library membership is activated upon Association membership and is free of charge for the first 3 years.

e. **Register with the High Court (if applicable) –** If you intend to practice in the Federal Court or Tribunal, you need to be entered onto the Register of Practitioners of the Hight Court of Australia. The application is free, however refer to the website for the cost for the certificate.

If you are already entered on the Register of Practitioners, you should ensure that you registration accords with your current entitlement to practise. Any person who previously practised as a solicitor, and was entered on the Register as such, will need to update their entry to a barrister.

**7. Setting up your practice:**

Once you receive your practising certificate and have completed the items at point 6, you are ready to commence practising. Things you should next consider:

a. **Reader rooms -** Rent and facilities vary, refer to our website for a list of reader rooms provided to the Association by the various chamber groups. If phone lines and internet are not included, consider pre-paid mobile internet and rely on your mobile phone, as reader rooms are often for 1 year only.

b. **Office furniture** - You might need to purchase office furniture, however, check first because some reader rooms will have built in furniture, so this may not be a requirement for you.

   To begin with, consider the minimum requirements including a desk, chair, desktop or laptop. Readers generally fill their room as the year progresses.

c. **Legal wear** - Including vest, jacket, jabot/tabs & collar, robes, wig. There are a few providers in Queensland, the most common being Ludlows Legal Regalia. There are also online providers, such as Regalia Craft. Cost will vary depending upon the provider.

d. **Online research tools -** Consider online research tools that you may need:

   - It is suggested you sign up to the Supreme Court Library - if you are registered as a library Member, access is available to the library 24/7.

   - For those who practise in crime, the Queensland Sentencing Information Service is administered through the Supreme Court Library. Barristers can register for access.

   - Lexis Nexis provides generalist packs to members of the Association, refer to the details contained in the Membership Kit provided you're your practising certificate for cost and inclusions.

e. **Accounting software and accounting services –** When selecting an Accountant, the Association recommends speaking with other barristers in chambers for a referral to an Accountant who has experience working with Barristers.

   For day-to-day operations you might consider purchasing an accounting software package. Some options include Bar Books or Silq, and you should contact these providers to confirm monthly costs.

f. **Signage** – Some chambers require you to pay for signage, often in the foyer of the building. Cost varies dependent upon the chambers.

g. **Additional insurance –** While members automatically qualify for cover under the Association's Group Life scheme, all barristers are encouraged to consider their personal circumstances and whether they should look to additional cover such as income protection or superannuation.

**8. Once you are set up:**

Once you have set up your practice you are encouraged to call on silks in your practice areas for court hours, networking and advice.

If you are interested in undertaking government work, you should consider registering your interest with the various Queensland Government Departments or Commonwealth Agencies. Further information can be found via the Whole of Government Policy for Engaging Barristers and Scheme Rules for Pre-Qualified Panel of Barristers for the ODPP.

You might also consider joining other networking opportunities (contact organisations to confirm membership costs):

- Queensland Young Lawyers membership
- Legal Aid Services Provider Panel
- Law Right
- Women's Legal Service
- Women Lawyers Association of Queensland