

The reformed route to becoming a qualified Manx advocate.

In November 2018, the Isle of Man Law Society (the "IOMLS") announced that it was monitoring trends in other jurisdictions as part of an ongoing review of the route to qualifying as a Manx advocate. Four years later, the Advocates Admission Regulations 2022 created a new path towards legal qualification on the Isle of Man. Now in October 2023, the IOMLS, working closely with the Jersey Institute of Law, has launched its reformatted Manx Bar Exam course for 2023/24.

Previously, an individual wishing to become a qualified Manx advocate was required to complete a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) or the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) (with a minimum degree classification of 2:2) as well as the Legal Practice Course (LPC) or Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) before they could begin their 'Articles' – a two year period of supervised experience in legal practice similar to the 'Training Contract' in England and Wales. During this period the individual must be given exposure to at least three different areas of law, one of which must be contentious and one of which must be non-contentious. During Articles, an individual is required to keep a record of work they have undertaken, and the subsequent skills learnt within legal practice and submit such to the IOMLS every six months. It would also be during this period that an individual would be required to pass the Manx Bar Examinations, a series of five exams on: Civil law and practice; Criminal law and practice; Public and Property law and practice; Business and Finance law and practice; and Accounts and ethics (each a "Head").

The key change under the 2022 regulations is the removal of the need for individuals to complete the LPC or BPTC before beginning their Articles and sitting the new format of the Manx Bar Exams. Individuals still must hold a qualifying law degree (LLB or GDL with a minimum degree classification of 2:2).

The new Manx Bar Exam course is itself similar to the Legal Practice Course in terms of its design. Individuals enrolled on the course will have access to notes for each of the Heads and will attend online lectures and seminars as well as interactive skills days as part of the course. Heads 1 and 2, Civil Law and practice and Criminal Law and practice, will now be assessed via three portfolio-based exercises each. Individuals must also attend an Advocacy Skills Day in preparation for a later examination of their oral interviewing, advice and advocacy skills.

The other three heads remain exam based. However, these will now be examined on an annual basis in April/May rather than running bi-annually as they did previously. As before, a maximum of three attempts to pass the Manx Bar Exam course are granted. Where an individual fails any of the individual heads, they are required to resit those that they have failed only and will not be required to resit any of the heads that they have passed. Should an individual fail one of the portfolio exercises, they will be issued with another exercise to complete during the course, although there will be a limit to how many portfolio exercises can be reissued within one take of the course.

For more
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