



The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Bar Tribunals and Adjudication Service ('BTAS').

BTAS is the body responsible for administering Disciplinary Tribunals, Fitness to Practise and other Hearings for barristers. It also organises Inns' Conduct Committee Hearings to consider the conduct of applicants to, and students of, the Inns of Court before they are called to the Bar.

This Report is composed of three parts, each prepared on behalf of the key Chairs of committees that oversee aspects of our work. The Report forms part of our commitment to openness and accountability in all we do and is intended to provide a summary of all key developments and data on our activities during the course of 2024.

In addition to a small and committed administrative team, well over a hundred individuals assist BTAS with its work, including serving as panellists or clerks at hearings, and acting on committees or working groups. Many of these do so on a pro-bono basis and their contribution is deserving of special recognition.

BTAS is a constituent part of the Council of the Inns of Court ('COIC'), a charity that exists to advance education in the sound administration of the law, including by promoting high standards of advocacy and enforcing professional standards of conduct. COIC supports the work of the four Inns of Court who provide the majority of COIC's funds.

If you would like any further information about BTAS please visit our website at www.tbttas.org.uk.

The Strategic Advisory Board's Report

1. The Strategic Advisory Board provides BTAS with independent advice, information and support on its strategic and operational activities and risks.
2. Its membership is composed of lay and legally qualified professionals who are appointed because of their expertise in disciplinary and regulatory work and includes representatives of both BTAS Disciplinary Pool Members and the Bar Standards Board (BSB). As at 31 December 2023, its membership was as follows:

Antony Townsend (Lay Chair of the SAB)

Desiree Artesi (legally qualified Disciplinary Pool panel member)

HHJ Jonathan Carroll (Chair of the Disciplinary Tribunal Service)

Lyndsey de Mestre KC (Chair of the Inns' Conduct Committee)

Emir Feisal (Lay BSB board member)

Louise Fisher (Lay member of the TAB)

Stephanie McIntosh (Lay Disciplinary Pool panel member)

Mark Neale (Director General of the BSB)

3. BTAS and its Pool of panel members are wholly independent of the BSB. Its relationship with the BSB is governed by a Service Agreement which defines the standards and performance expected by one party of the other. Both the SAB and the BSB monitor BTAS' performance.
4. During the final stages of the FieldFisher report for the BSB, SAB contributed and approved the final response from BTAS on the recommendations. Following the publication of the report in April 2024, BTAS and the BSB have been working through the recommendations. The recommendations for BTAS are broadly divided into three categories:

- A. Enhancements to case management that to not require a rule change;
 - B. Review of rule changes needed to further enhance case management;
 - C. Review of wider governance matters.
- 5. In anticipation of the report, BTAS began implementing changes from the beginning of 2024. SAB approved the set up of a Case Management review group to look at implementing administrative changes that do not require any Rule changes. This group comprises members of SAB, BTAS and the BSB. This resulted in the creation of a 'Hearing Readiness questionnaire' which will begin its pilot in January 2025. This is designed to identify any potential issues earlier in the run up to the Disciplinary Tribunal hearing, helping to avoid any delays. This effectiveness of this process will be reviewed during 2025.
- 6. BTAS are actively involved in the implementation of the recommendations and the ongoing projects with the BSB and will continue the work together during 2025. Any proposed changes will be dealt with in consultation with SAB and BTAS staff.
- 7. COIC has set aside funds for 2025 for BTAS to consider enhancing the provision of the audio-visual equipment in the two hearing rooms and electronic document handling.
- 8. As of April 2024, BTAS will be part funded by the BSB with the four Inns of Court and the BSB equally sharing the cost.

The Disciplinary Tribunals

- 9. The SAB's Report covers hearings delivered by BTAS under the terms of its Service Agreement with the BSB, which are as follows:
 - i. **Disciplinary Tribunals** for barristers facing charges of professional misconduct brought by the Bar Standards Board. Tribunal Panels are made up of three persons (referred to

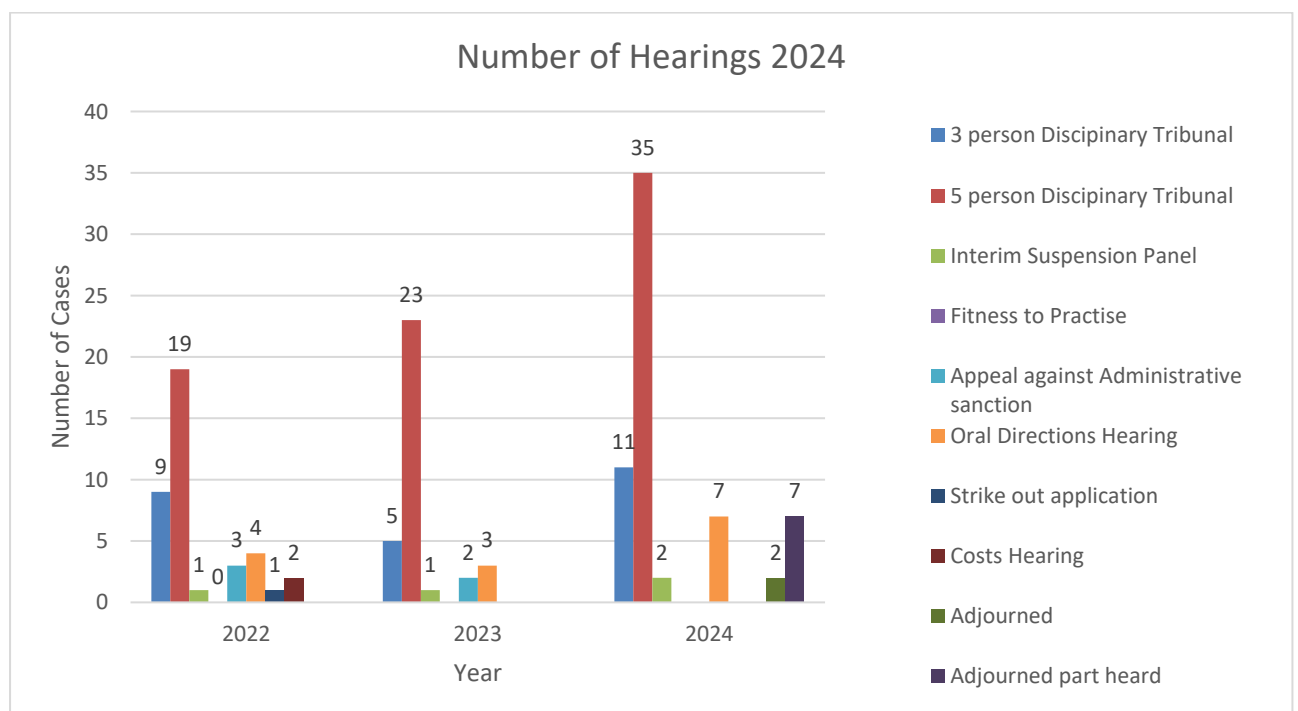
elsewhere in this report as ‘3P DT’), or for the most serious cases five persons (‘5P DT’);

- ii. **Interim Suspension Panels** (‘ISP’) which take place when the BSB believes that it is in the public interest that a barrister be immediately suspended in advance of a full hearing;
- iii. **Fitness to Practise Hearings** (‘FTP’), where the BSB has concerns about the capacity of a barrister to act on medical grounds; and,
- iv. **Appeals against Administrative Sanctions** (‘AAAS’) imposed by the BSB on barristers for matters which are deemed not serious enough to amount to professional misconduct.

10. Where necessary BTAS also administers hearings to determine directions and interim applications; figures for these hearings are set out in the relevant sections of this report.

Number of hearings in 2024

11. The following chart sets out the total number of Tribunals and Hearings that took place in 2024. Data is also provided for the two previous years for the purposes of comparison:

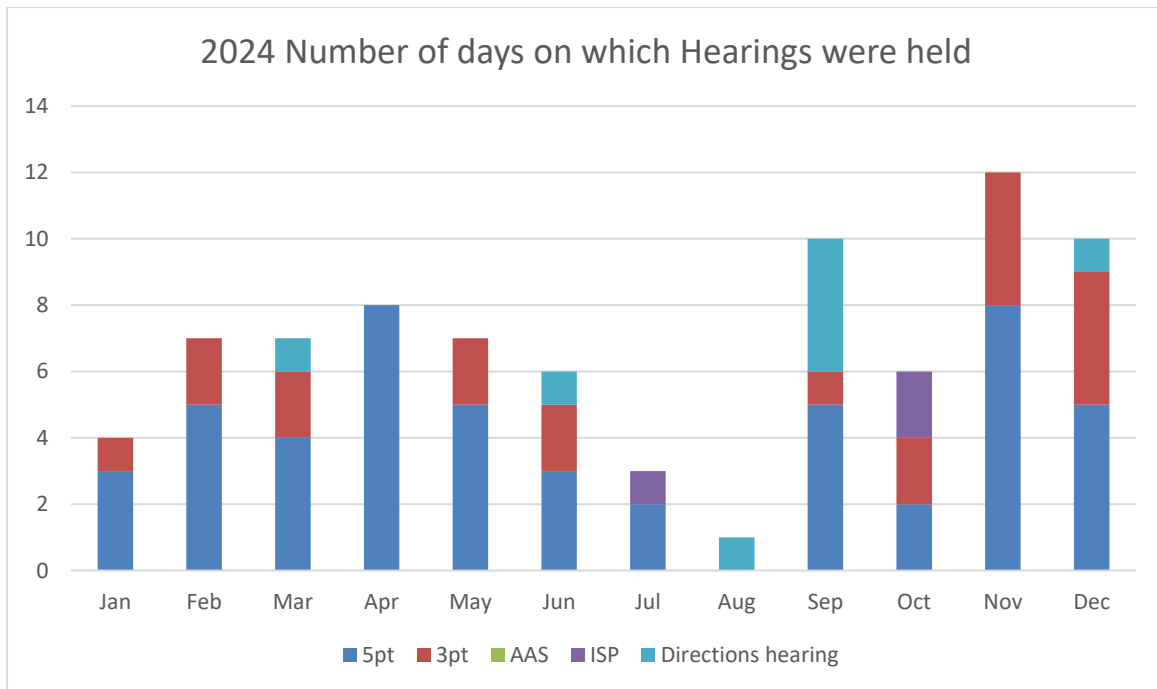


12. A total of 55 Hearings were held over 80 days in 2024. 46 hearings were held for Disciplinary Tribunals, 3 of these were adjourned for future listing by the Tribunal (one hearing more than once). 7 Adjourned part heard (one more than once) with 5 of these concluding during 2024 and 2 will continue in 2025. 34 Disciplinary Hearings reached their final conclusion in 2024.
13. 4 cases were initially listed but adjourned before opening for the reasons below.

Health of respondent	2
Judge availability	1
Respondent representative availability	1

Number of Days on which Hearings were held in 2024

14. While many cases can be concluded within one day, others are more complex and are scheduled to take place over several days; others must be adjourned and be concluded at another date. The following chart sets out the number of days (broken down by month) on which hearings took place in 2024:



15. There is an average of 6.8 days per month of activity compared with 4.2 in 2023. 86% of BTAS' activity was for Disciplinary Tribunals which is the same as 2023.

16. Most hearings at BTAS are conducted in person, however should it be necessary, hearings can and are conducted remotely or hybrid. In 2024 85% were held in person.

17. 79% of respondents were present during their Disciplinary Tribunal hearing.

Present and represented	13	38%
Represented themselves	14	41%
Not present and not represented	6	18%
Not present but represented	1	3%
	34	

18. In 2024 55 hearings took place on a total of 80 days which represents an average of 1.5 days per hearing. In 2023 the average was 1.5 days per hearing. The average length per each hearing type is set out below

3P DT	1.4 day
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5P DT	1.6 days
ISP	1 day
AAS	1 day
ODH	1 days

19. Information on the length of individual completed hearing types is set out below. Most hearings conclude within one day.

	No. of days				
	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
3P DT	4		1		
5P DT	17	2	1	2	1
ISP	1				
AAS	2				
ODH	3				
	27	2	2	2	1
	79%	6%	6%	6%	3%

Panel Outcomes in 2024

20. The table below sets out information on the outcomes of all final Tribunals hearings that took place during 2024. A number of matters were part heard or awaiting the outcome as at 31 December 2024 as set out below.

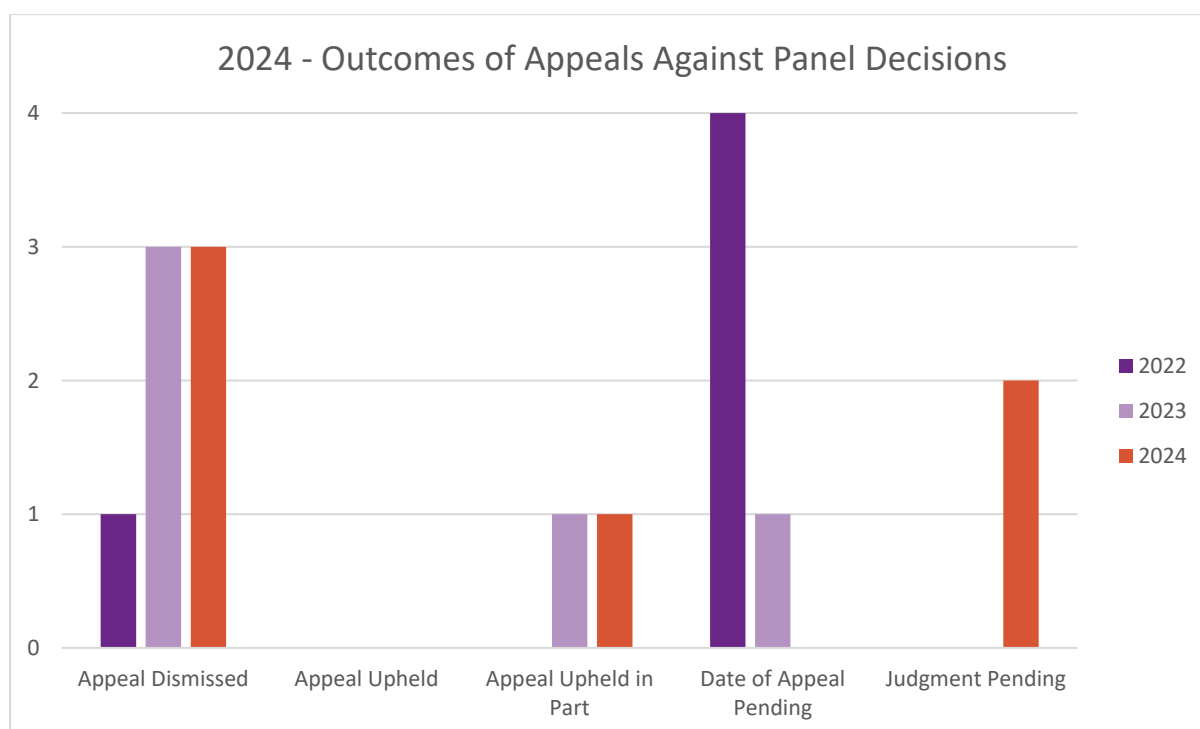
Decision made	Costs	Hearing type
Disbarment		
Disbarred	£2670 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension)	No costs	5P DT
Disbarred (No practise certificate issue)	£750 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension) & 3 month suspension	£1,191 to BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension)	£12,003.60 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (No practise certificate issue)	£5,544 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension)	£1,000 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension)	£2,670 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (No practise certificate issue)	£2,670 to the BSB	5P DT

Disbarred	No costs	5P DT
Disbarred (No practise certificate issue)	£650 to the BSB	5P DT
Disbarred (immediate suspension)	No costs	5P DT
Suspension		
Suspension for 3 months/ reprimanded and advice	£250 to the BSB	3P DT
Suspension for 18 months - Prohibition thereafter to accepting or carrying out public access work until provision to the BSB of satisfactory proof that he has retaken mandatory training to undertake public access work (Decision Appealed in March 2024)	£5,443 to BSB	5P DT
Suspension for 6 months	£2,496 to the BSB	5P DT
Suspension for 4 months	£2,670 to the BSB	5P DT
Suspension for 9 months	£1,200 to the BSB	5P DT
Suspension for 3 months	£4,794 to the BSB	5P DT
Suspension for 18 months	£1,560 to the BSB	5P DT
Fine		
Fined £5,000	£5,015.78 to BSB	5P DT
Fined £10,000 and reprimanded	£1,560 to BSB	3P DT
Fined £5,000 and reprimanded	£2,670 to the BSB	3P DT
Fined £50,000	£4,488 to the BSB	5P DT
Reprimand		
Other		
Directions Made	N/A	DH
Directions Made	N/A	DH
Case Dismissed	No costs	5P DT
BSB not to issue Practising certificate for 5 years	No costs	5P DT
No further action	No costs	5P DT
BSB not to issue practising certificate for 2 years	£3,251.35 to the BSB	5P DT
BSB not to issue practising certificate for 12 months	Costs TBC	3P DT
Case Dismissed	No Costs	5P DT
Case Dismissed	£9,500 to Respondent	3P DT
Directions made – case closed	N/A	DH
Case Dismissed	TBC	5P DT
Case Dismissed	No costs	3P DT
Case Dismissed	TBC	3P DT
Adjournments		
Adjourned part heard (November 2024)	N/A	5P DT
Adjourned part heard (November and December 2024)	N/A	3P DT
Adjourned (September & November 2024)	N/A	3P DT

21. Only a 5 person Disciplinary Tribunal Panel can impose a sanction of disbarment and suspension over 12 months. In 2024, 44% of 5 person panel outcomes were disbarment, this compares to 55% in 2023.
22. 44% of Hearings were completed within 6 months of directions being effective compared with 43% in 2023.
23. The average length from effective directions to a final decision was 8.2 months and the median was 7.2 months. This is above the expected 6 month target.

Outcomes of appeals in 2024 against the decisions of Disciplinary Tribunals

24. Barristers have the right of appeal in the Administrative Court against the decisions and sanctions imposed by Disciplinary Tribunals. The chart below sets out the outcomes or progress of appeal hearings that were extant in 2024 (although the Tribunals in question may have taken place in previous years). Numbers for the last two years are provided for the purposes of comparison:



25. BTAS carefully considers the outcomes of all appeals, and particularly those where the actions or decisions of a Tribunal may have been called into question, with a view to improving the training, guidance and resources available to those who serve as members of Disciplinary Tribunals. As of 31 December 2024, of the appeals in the system during the year, one was upheld in part, three were dismissed and two are yet to be heard. As to the one upheld in part, it was allowed on the grounds of apparent bias and was remitted back to a differently constituted Disciplinary Tribunal for a sanction hearing.

BTAS Costs 2024

26. Panel Members and Clerks were entitled to claim reasonable expenses, and fees, for their attendance at hearings and training. Full information about the fees and reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses for Panellists can be found in the Expenses Policy on the BTAS website. The combined fees and expenses paid for the various types of hearings were as follows:

Disciplinary Tribunals	£162,637
Inns Conduct Committee Hearings	£16,327

27. In addition to these fee and expense payments, BTAS also incurs standard operational expenditure such as staff costs, committee costs, training costs, rent and IT infrastructure etc. In total BTAS's annual expenditure was approximately £560,000. This is up from 2023 costs of £450,00.

The Inns' Conduct Committee Report

1. The Inns' Conduct Committee (ICC) is the body responsible for considering applications for admission to and Call by an Inn of Court where there is any matter which might affect whether the applicant is a 'fit and proper' person to become a practising barrister. It is also responsible for considering disciplinary cases involving student members of an Inn of Court which call in to question whether the student is fit and proper to practise and hearing appeals by student members against disciplinary decisions of their Inn with regard to more minor matters.
2. Applicants wishing to join an Inn of Court must disclose information about themselves, as required in their Admission Declaration. This includes information about criminal convictions, bankruptcy proceedings and disciplinary matters. Student members of an Inn are also subject to obligations to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check and disclose matters to their Inn, including as required in their Call Declaration and by the Bar Training Rules. Where a relevant matter is disclosed (or comes to light), the Inns must refer it to the ICC for consideration. An ICC 'Screening Panel' considers whether the matter referred needs to be considered by an ICC 'Hearing Panel'. All ICC Panels include lay and legal members.

Memorandum of Understanding with the Bar Standards Board

3. In 2019 the Bar Standards Board entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Council of the Inns of Court, specifically in relation to the operation of the ICC, and the Inns. The MOU sets out the roles and responsibilities of the parties in relation to qualification as a Barrister in England and Wales. It provides the parties with assurance that only those who are fit and proper are called to the Bar and that the related work is completed in accordance with the BSB's four principles of Bar training which are: accessibility, flexibility, affordability and high standards:

4. **Accessibility** – The ICC’s services are accessible to students and applicants wherever they are in the world, with hearings taking place in person, unless there is a particular need for a remote hearing. Hearings are less formal (though not informal) than disciplinary tribunals, with panels taking their time to guide applicants and students through the process. Those appearing before a panel are given clear information as to how to prepare and what to expect on the day. The ICC, as part of BTAS, has policies covering reasonable adjustments and vulnerable witnesses. Panel members and staff receive equality and diversity training.
5. **Flexibility** – The ICC seeks to make its operations as convenient for applicants and students as possible with a view to completing proceedings within the timeframes required for Inn admission or Call. Screening Panels and Hearing Panels take place across the year.
6. **Affordability** – The ICC, which is funded by the Inns, is delivered at no charge to applicants or students. All those appearing before a Hearing Panel are given information regarding ‘Advocate’ which is an organisation that provides free representation – though most people represent themselves.
7. **High Standards/Quality Assurance** – The quality of the service provided is ensured in a number of ways by:
 - the production of this report which sets out data regarding referrals, hearings, outcomes and trends;
 - oversight and reviews undertaken by the Inns Conduct Committee which is made up (as with panels) of a mixture of members of the Bar and lay members and in turn oversight by the BTAS Strategic Advisory Board;
 - the provision of training to all BTAS panellists with those training needs being overseen by the Tribunal Appointments Body;
 - careful recruitment and selection of panellists by the Tribunal Appointments Body (who receive training in recruitment and selection);
 - the provision of rules and guidance documents to ensure fair processes and consistent outcomes, such documents being

produced in collaboration with the BSB and in conformity with BSB regulations;

- the provision of appeal and complaints processes.

Membership of the Inns' Conduct Committee

8. As at 31 December 2024, the membership of the Inns' Conduct Committee was as follows:

Lyndsey de Mestre KC (Chair)

Colin Wilby (Vice Chair – Lay)

Jonathan Glasson KC (Barrister member)

Tom Cosgrove KC (Barrister member)

Siobhan Heron (Barrister member)

Tracy Stephenson (Lay member)

Janine Green (Lay member)

Naomi Ryan (Barrister member)

Stephen McNamara (Barrister member)

Developments/Action Points and Plans

9. **Guidance and Guidelines** – In early 2023 the ICC Chair and BTAS Registrar met with the BSB to ask them to consider a list of development points including:

- move the burden of proof from the Inns to the applicant in applications for Call (to align with applications for admission). Once this is done the ICC will review its 'Disputed Facts Protocol';
- consider the introduction of guidance on dealing with 'low level' misconduct;
- review the BSB 'Fit and Proper Guidelines' to ensure that it aligns to the new BTAS Sanctions Guidance and to develop

the guidelines on health, readmission and exclusion from another profession.

Unfortunately, due to capacity issues at the BSB, these matters did not progress in 2023. In early 2024 the ICC Chair wrote to the Director General of the BSB expressing concern about the lack of progress. The BSB responded that matters would be progressed, with the burden of proof and guidance on health matters being the priority.

Due to further lack of progress, in mid 2024 the ICC set up an 'ICC review group' in order to push forward the above and met with the BSB to explain directly what the issues were in more depth.

At the ICC meeting in December 2024, the BSB provided an update directly to the Committee with a timeline of progression for 2025.

- **Develop 'Turnitin' Guidance.** New guidance on the interpretation and use of 'Turnitin' reports was developed and came into use in early 2024.
- **Regular Scheduling of Screening Panels.** In 2024 the ICC moved to scheduling Screening Panels more regularly throughout the whole year and informing the Inns of those dates so that they can work towards them. This received very positive feedback and enables the Inns to manage their workload and the applicants/'students' expectations more effectively.
- **FAQs for Screening and Hearing Panels.** In 2024 BTAS began developing FAQ guidance for applicants and students on the Screening Panel and Hearing Panel process to ensure they are effectively prepared. Both documents were made in consultation with the Inns administration and are due to be in use in early 2025.

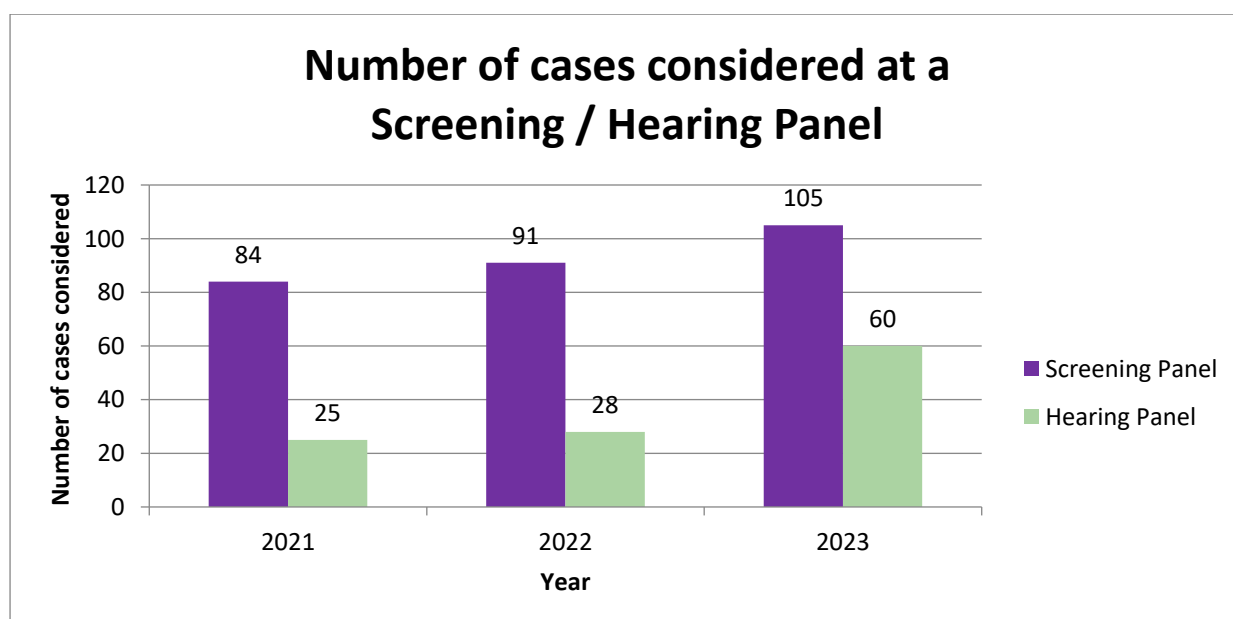
Referrals to the ICC: data and trends

10. During 2024, a total of 124 individuals were referred to the ICC by the four Inns of Court. 49 Students, 72 admission and 3 readmission.

2021	84	↑	25%
2022	91	↑	8%
2023	113	↑	24%
2024	124	↑	10%

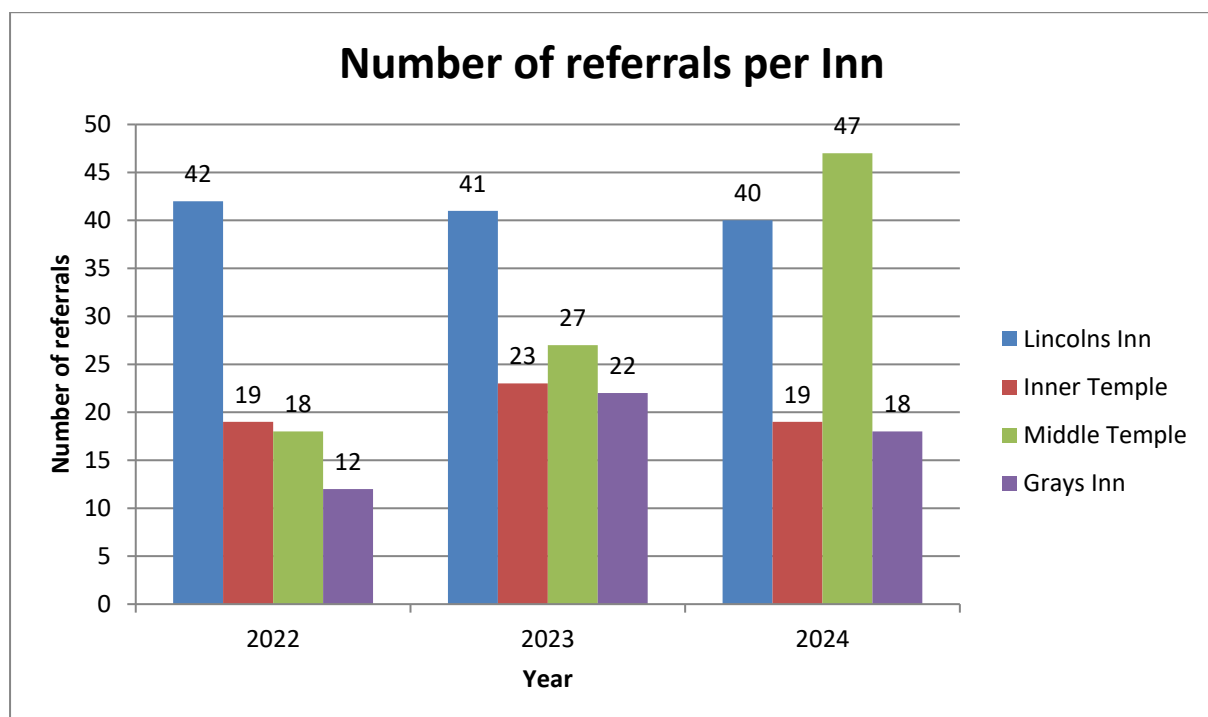
As can be seen from the table above, there continues to be an increase in the number of referrals. This, in part, reflects the fact that there is a continuing, though not wholly consistent, growth in student membership over recent years.

11. 129 cases were considered at a Screening Panel in 2024 (this includes 10 cases held over from 2023), 5 cases were referred in November and December 2024 and will be considered at a Screening Panel in 2025. 64 cases were referred to a Hearing Panel, a rate of 52%, compared with 57% in 2023. This higher rate of referral is much closer to the rates of referral to hearing panels in 2019 and 2020, which were 58% and 50% respectively.

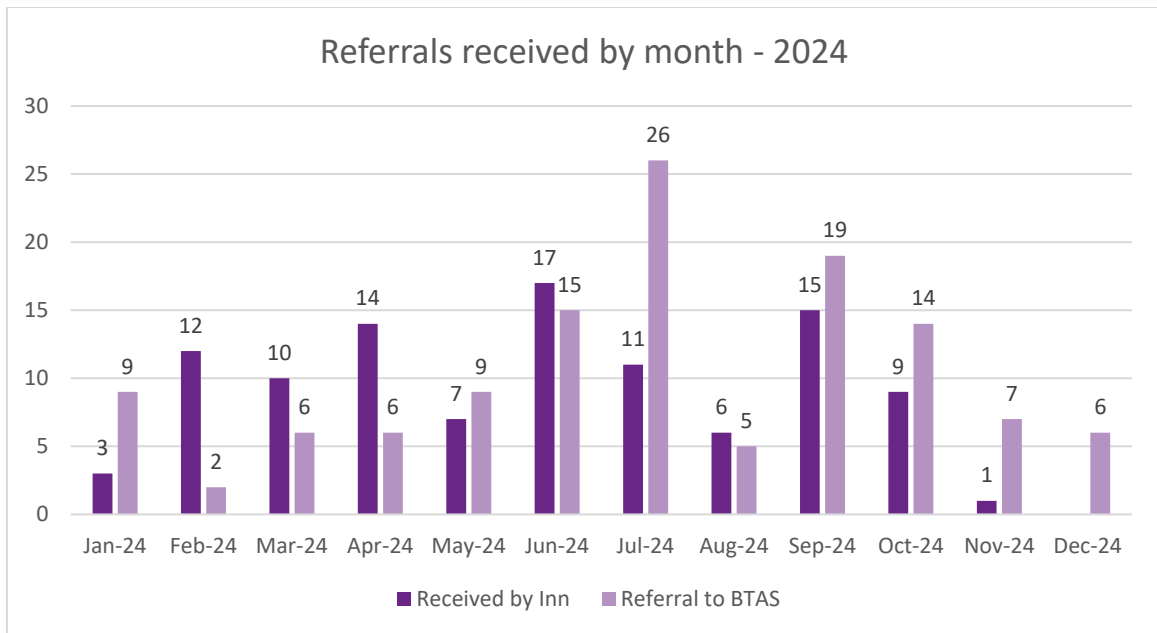


12.The number of referrals, according to the Inn of Court that made them, is set out in the table below. The proportion of the referrals made by each Inn is very broadly, though not exactly, proportionate to the number of admission applications received by each Inn:

- Lincoln’s Inn had 29% of admissions and 32% of referrals;
- Inner Temple had 19% of admissions and 15% of referrals;
- Middle Temple had 28% of admissions and 38% of referrals;
- Gray’s Inn had 14% of admissions and 15% of referrals.



13.The following graph shows the number of ICC cases received per month by the Inns of Court (according to the referral forms they complete), in comparison to when they were subsequently passed on by the Inns to BTAS.

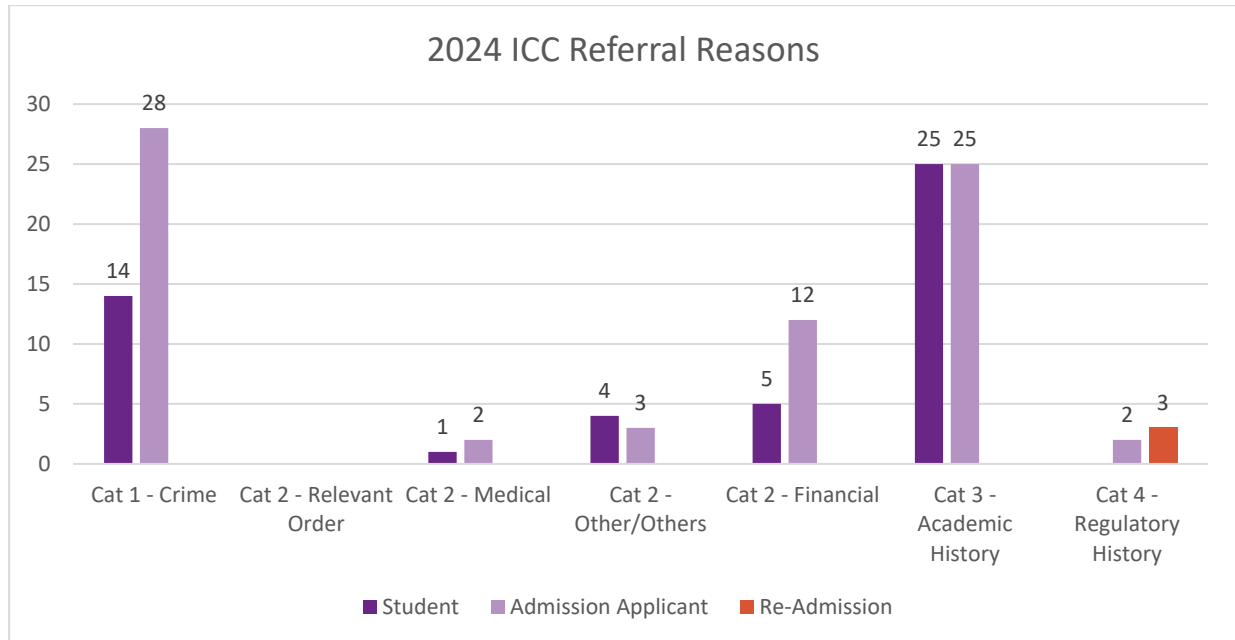


14.Set out below are the detailed outcomes of the cases referred to the ICC in 2024.

Screening Panel	Student	Applicants	Re-admission	Totals	
Refer back to Inn	19	40		59	44%
Refer to Hearing Panel	30	31	3	61	48%
Adjourned for more information	1	2		3	2%
Withdrew application		3		3	2%
Yet to consider	2	3		5	4%
				134	

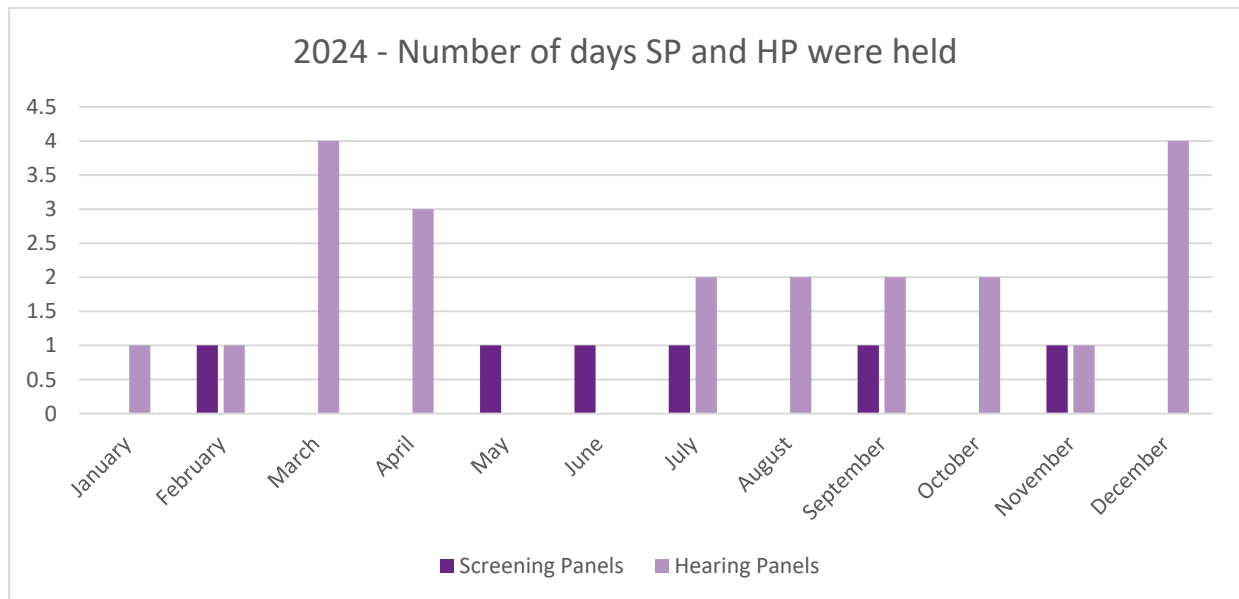
Hearing Panel	Student	Applicants	Re-admission	Totals	
Fit and Proper	19	20		39	70%
Not Fit and Proper	1	5	2	8	14%
Call Deferred	1			1	2%
Admission postponed		2		2	4%
Reprimanded	2			2	4%
Adjourned for more information	1	3		4	7%
				56	

15. The Table below gives a break-down of referrals to the ICC by subject-matter, in relation to applicants and students:



16. It is evident that a large proportion of the ICC's time in 2024, as in previous years, was spent considering cases of academic misconduct and criminal convictions.

17. The following chart sets out the number of Screening Panels and Hearing Panels that took place each month. Over the course of 2024, there were Screening Panels on 6 days and Hearing Panels on 22 days. For efficiency, both Screening Panels and Hearing Panels generally consider more than one individual referral.



Applications for review of ICC decisions & Complaints

18. An applicant or student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a referral to the ICC may apply to the BSB for a review of the ICC decision. Applications for review have been dealt with on the basis of consideration of documents submitted to the BSB's Authorisations Department.
19. In 2024, 7 matters were reviewed to the BSB. 4 decisions affirmed the ICC decision and 3 were substituted from a 5 year expulsion from the Inn to 3 years expulsion.
20. **Complaints** - BTAS has a 'Service Complaints Policy' which sets out how and when complaints can be made regarding all aspects of the service including the ICC. No complaints were received in 2024.

The Tribunal Appointments Body's Report

1. The Tribunal Appointments Body ('the TAB') is the independent body responsible for appointing barrister, lay and KC members of the Disciplinary Tribunal Pool, and barristers to act as clerks at hearings. It is also responsible for ensuring that those appointed are fit and proper to act, both at the time they were appointed and throughout the entirety of their term of office.
2. Panel members and clerks of the Disciplinary Tribunal Pool serve at Hearing Panels convened to hear Disciplinary Tribunals (both three and five-person Panels), Interim Suspension Panels, Fitness to Practise Hearing Panels and Appeals Against Administrative Sanctions (imposed by the Bar Standards Board) arising out of alleged professional misconduct by barristers. Panel members also hear cases considered in accordance with the Rules of the Inns' Conduct Committee (ICC) to determine whether prospective barristers are fit and proper persons to undertake this role.
3. As at 31 December 2024 the membership of the Tribunal Appointments Body was:

Lady Justice Simler (Chair)

Edmund Burge KC (Lincoln's Inn member)

Richard Humphries KC (Inner Temple member)

Christopher Kennedy KC (Gray's Inn member)

Ann Hussey KC (Middle Temple member)

Ruby Sayed (Inner Temple member)

Kevin Saunders (Gray's Inn member)

Rachel Effney (Lay representative)

Louise Fisher (Lay representative)

Nick Paladina (Lay representative)

Colin Davidson (Lay representative)

TAB Costs

4. During 2024 and 2025 TAB will incur costs in excess of £50,000 because the triannual Panellist and Clerk recruitment and training exercise will take place in 2025.

Pool Members and Clerks in 2024

5. As at 31 December 2024, the total membership of the Disciplinary Tribunal Pool was 50 Panel members and 7 Clerks.

Role	31 December 2024
Barrister	27
Lay	15
KC	8
Clerk	7

6. Full details of the current membership of the Disciplinary Pool can be found [here](#).

Composition of the Pool in 2024

7. The following charts below sets out information about the composition of the Pool by sex, ethnicity and age (as of 31 December 2024):

	Male	Female
Lay	6	9
Barrister	13	14
Silk	6	2
	25	25
	50%	50%

	Age			
	18-24	25-44	45-59	60 and over
Lay	0	1	10	4
Barrister	0	17	10	0
Silk	0	1	6	1
	0	19	26	5
	0%	37%	51%	12%

	Ethnicity					
	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or Chinese British	Other
Lay	14	0	1	0	0	0
Barrister	15	1	4	2	0	5
Silk	8	0	0	0	0	0
	37	1	5	2	0	5
	75%	2%	10%	4%	0%	10%

8. It is of particular note that:
- Gender – whilst 50% of members were female, only 2 out of the 6 KC members are female.
 - Ethnicity – there has been an increase to 25% of members declaring an ethnicity other than white.

Panellist Activity in 2024

9. During 2024 there were 37 disciplinary hearings for barristers (not including oral directions, interim applications and costs hearings), and 22 days of ICC hearings for prospective barristers. That meant Pool members had the opportunity to serve on 209 panels (made of 9 x 3 person panels, 29 x 5 person panels (not including judicial chairs) and 22 ICC 3 person panels). This equates to an average opportunity to sit on 4.2 panels per year.
10. While the TAB's priority is ensuring that the Pool is large enough that sufficient members will always be available to serve on a Tribunal Panel whenever one needs to be convened, it is always mindful that Pool members should, if possible, sit sufficiently often to maintain familiarity and expertise in the role. The TAB has historically aimed for 5 opportunities for panel members to sit each year. In 2021 this number was 4.1, in 2022 3.9 and in 2023 3.5 and, as stated above, in 2024 this was 4.2. The TAB will need to take this into account when deciding how many panel members to recruit in 2025.

Recruitment Exercise 2025

11. As mentioned above, the TAB undertakes a recruitment exercise every third year. Preparation for the next exercise began in 2024 with recruitment and training of panel members to take place in 2025. In broad terms the plan is as follows:
- a. Summer 2024 – refresh the membership of the Tribunal Appointments Body;

- b. Early 2025 – TAB to review the lessons learned from the 2023 exercise and devise the 2025 exercise.
- c. March – May 2025 – train the TAB members in the selection and interview process and in matters such as unconscious bias;
- d. March 2025 – advertise;
- e. April/May 2025 – shortlisting;
- f. June/July 2025 – Interviews;
- g. Autumn 2025 – training of new panellists and refresher training for existing panellists.