

October centralised assessment sit opportunity

The Board of the BSB has considered the implications of the August centralised assessments and the challenges that some students faced. The Board apologises for these difficulties and is committed to putting right the problems that arose to enable students to continue with their careers. The Board has therefore decided that a further assessment opportunity will be made available in October. The arrangements for these examinations will be made by the Providers and will take place as traditional pen and paper assessments at University campuses or other suitable venues to be found by Providers (this includes overseas venues).

Assessment dates

The dates of the assessments are:

Professional Ethics – Monday 5 October 2020 2pm – 4.30pm

Civil Litigation – Wednesday 7 October 2020 2pm – 5pm

Criminal Litigation – Monday 12 October 2020 2pm – 5pm

Who can take the assessments?

We recognise that any student who sat in August may feel that they were affected by the issues that arose from the Pearson VUE booking and OnVUE systems and we are offering this sit as a global mitigating action for anyone who wishes to avail themselves of it, regardless of whether they had technical issues or not. These assessments will also be open to anyone who deferred to December 2020.

Booking arrangements

Students wishing to sit their assessments in October should contact their Providers to register **by 5pm on Monday 21 September 2020**. Providers will give clear instructions about how to register. Late registration will not be permitted, and students are encouraged therefore to ensure that they register on time.

Reasonable adjustments

As per the usual process for the centralised assessments, Providers will be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable adjustment needs of candidates are accommodated. Students with reasonable adjustment needs should make sure that their learning agreements with their Providers are accurate and up to date.

Approach to the assessments

Students will not know the results of their August exams before either registering for or sitting the exams in October. Therefore, in effect August and October act as the same 'sit' and are counted as the same opportunity. October is an exceptional sit put on as a mitigating action to recognise the difficulties faced in August.

Students who have taken centralised assessments in both August and October 2020 will be credited with whichever is the highest mark of the August and October 2020 sits.

August/October 2020 marks will not be capped unless the student was already not on a first sit.

Any student who sits any of the three centralised assessments in October 2020 will not be able to sit the corresponding centralised assessment in December 2020 as the results from the October sit will not be available in time for registration for December.

There are therefore two tracks available to students – take all three centralised assessments in October **or** take all three assessments in December 2020. Students may not sit all three assessments in both October and December, but may, for example, sit Ethics in October

and then Criminal and Civil Litigation in December. Students may wish to discuss their options with their Providers. It will depend on the circumstances of the student which track is right for them. In order to help students decide which is the best option for them, set out below are the implications of each route:

Track A: Sitting the assessments in October 2020

The advantage of sitting the assessment in October is that students will get to keep the best of the August and October 2020 marks. It will also mean that the gap between revision in August and assessment in October is relatively short. The downside is that the next assessment opportunity for Track A candidates is 31 March 2021 for Professional Ethics and mid-April 2021 for the litigation subjects. The risk therefore is that a candidate who fails in August and October would have to wait between 4 and 6 months to resit.

Students who had originally intended to defer to December may avail themselves of the October 2020 sit.

Students intending to sit in October 2020 must register with their Provider by **5pm on Monday 21 September 2020**.

Track B: Sitting the assessment in December 2020

The advantage of sitting in December is that students know their August results before deciding whether to sit again. It also allows students longer to revise before they sit their assessments. If a student chooses not to sit in October and prefers to wait to receive their results and sit in December, this would mean that the August sit would be a 'normal' sitting. All the standard assessment regulations would therefore apply to the August sitting, and a student therefore could apply for an appeal / mitigating circumstances in relation to the August sit in the usual way. Should a student who sat the assessment in August and failed choose to sit again in December, it will be the December result that counts irrespective of whether it is higher or lower than the August mark.

Students who had originally intended to defer to December may continue to do.

Students intending to sit in December 2020 must register with their Provider by **Friday 13 November 2020**.

Waiving the centralised assessments

We understand that many students called for a waiver of the centralised assessments or for a proxy mark from Provider sat assessments to be used. The BPTC is a professional qualification relied upon by employers, the profession, students themselves, and most importantly, the public as a means of ensuring that people starting their careers as a barrister are competent to do so. Waiving the core knowledge-based assessments of the BPTC is not compatible with the expectations of the BPTC and out with the BSB's responsibilities to maintain standards of practice at the Bar. Proxy marks are not possible given the absence of structured mock exams or coursework that could be used to extrapolate possible marks for the centralised assessments. The BSB is therefore clear that pen and paper sat assessments, managed as usual by Providers, is the best means of enabling as many students as possible to be assessed. Providers are experienced in staging the examinations, accommodating reasonable adjustments and finding suitable exam venues across the world. We are confident that they will be able to deliver the October assessments successfully.

Timeline

Results for August 2020

Providers will release the Civil and Criminal Litigation results of the August 2020 sit on Monday 12 October 2020. The results will be released to students after 3pm so no student will know their results before the October sitting of Criminal Litigation. Providers will release the Professional Ethics results of the August 2020 sit on Friday 6 November 2020. Students will therefore have one week to register if they wish to sit in December.

Results for October 2020

Providers will release the Civil and Criminal Litigation results of the October 2020 sit on Friday 27 November 2020. Providers will release the Professional Ethics results of the October 2020 sit in the week commencing 18 January 2021 (please contact your Provider to confirm the precise date). All October results are released after the final date for registration for the December sit; students therefore cannot sit in December.

December 2020 exam dates

The dates of the assessments are:

BPTC Professional Ethics – Wednesday 2 December 2020 2pm – 4.30pm

BPTC Criminal Litigation Friday 4 December 2020 2pm – 5pm

BPTC Civil Litigation – Monday 7 December 2020 2pm – 5pm

The December Litigation results will be released to Providers on Wednesday 27 January 2021. The December Professional Ethics results will be released to Providers on Wednesday 24 February 2021. Providers are to agree the dates on which the results will be released to students after their exam boards take place.