

COMBAR E&D Committee: 2019/2020 Projects

1. This short paper sets out the work that COMBAR's E&D committee has been doing over the last year. As set out in the last year's paper on project and costings, the projects of the E&D committee can be broken down into three broad categories:
 - (1) Over-arching projects;
 - (2) Projects aimed at access to the profession (mainly aimed at university students); and
 - (3) Projects aimed at progression once in the profession.

2019/2020 Projects

Over-arching projects

2. In last year's project and costings document E&D were of the view that (1) COMBAR's website needed to be re-developed and (2) COMBAR needed an social media strategy so that students, barristers and the wider public knew what COMBAR was doing.
3. E&D felt this was a project which would be better done by the Exec. Committee. James MacDonald took on this project on and has done a brilliant job. E&D provided a link for James to assist (Sid Dhar at Essex Court Chambers), wrote the E&D section of the website, and sourced and provided both profiles and "a day in the life" of commercial barristers to go on it.
4. The profiles were from a range of commercial practitioners and chosen to show the depth of practice (in terms of subject areas), the different routes taken (including employed/ self-employed/ those who qualified as solicitors first), different educational backgrounds (i.e. not all Oxbridge), different socio-economic backgrounds (i.e. not all private school) as well as making sure other protected characteristics were covered including LGBTQ, gender and BAME. At the moment there are no photographs to go with the profiles but hopefully once Covid-19 restrictions are lesser it will be possible to have photographs taken of all those who have been profiled.
5. E&D understands that social media is being looked at and hopefully once that is up and running it will be easier to announce all the things that COMBAR (including E&D) are doing.

Projects aimed at Access

6. ***Law Fairs*** - The Law Fairs programme which COMBAR E&D set up many years ago is now being administered by the Bar Council together with the Inns and a number of SBAs (including COMBAR) and employed barrister organisations. The law fairs are chosen to by reference to geographical location (to make sure all circuits are covered) and generally to universities where around 10% of their students or more are from low-participation neighbourhoods (according to [HESA data](#)). We took part in many law fairs this year. This coming year the Bar Council is investigating how to do law fairs in a Covid-19 world. Victoria Windle of the E&D Committee is currently attending meetings to discuss how best to take this forward.

7. ***Inner Temple and Middle Temple COMBAR scholarship schemes*** – these are existing schemes which we support. They are administered by the Inns and look at under-represented groups. The schemes are slightly different – both involve a week’s mini-pupillage at a commercial set and ongoing mentoring – the Middle Temple scheme also includes a week’s marshalling with a judge in the commercial court whereas the Inner Temple scheme has multiple events aimed at (for example) CV clinics etc.

8. The placements for 2019 took place. We have increased the number of awards we give for 2020. However, the position for this year is uncertain due to Covid. Georgina Peters on behalf of E&D is liaising with both Inns about the schemes and how we might facilitate placements in due course.

9. ***Cake & Counsel*** – this is an organisation set up by a criminal practitioner (Ruth Reid at 3 Temple Gardens) but whose outreach extends to all practice areas. Cake & Counsel provide informal and formal networking and learning opportunities for aspiring lawyers and law students from all backgrounds and have held highly successful events targeting aspirant BAME barristers in the past.

10. We started partnering with cake and counsel about a year ago. We have participated in (and/or funded) three events:
 - (1) a panel event at Coventry University together with its Commercial Awareness Society called *“Is the Commercial Bar for Everyone?”* which involved a panel discussion and facilitated networking (with cake). This event was live streamed and very well attended. The panel was predominantly BAME (4 out of 5 speakers), 3 speakers identified as women and 2 identified as men and between them there was a wide variety of commercial practice areas and types

of practice (employed, self-employed, sole practitioner (i.e. not in a chambers), second career and a mixture of London and other circuits).

The feedback from the event:

“huge thank you for your time and tips shared with attendees. The feedback was great (though I am yet to go through all the feedback sheets). A number remarked that it had prompted them to consider a career at the Bar in general, or at the Commercial Bar. They found you all remarkable and were pleased you all took the time to speak with them after and share details/ information. I noticed you were all surrounded by students with further questions. I too was really pleased at the amount of interaction and questions during and after the event.”

(2) part funded and participated in an Inclusion Networking event in February 2020 which was run by Queen Mary Bar Society, KCL Bar & Mooting Society and Cake & Counsel. The bio for the event was *“an opportunity for students to network with barristers from all practice areas and all walks of life, reshaping the image many students have of the Bar”*;

(3) This week (24 June) there is a remote session on pupillage. The speaker on behalf of COMBAR is Koye Akoni from Quadrant Chambers.

11. **Mock Interview and CV workshop for commercial pupillage applicants** – this is done in conjunction with TECBAR’s BAME Network and also ChBA’s E&D Committee. We did an in-person programme in 2019 but this year we are running it over the summer remotely. We have had a huge number of students sign up and even after Covid restrictions are lifted we will continue to offer a remote option as it has allowed us to reach students from a much wider geographical pool.

12. **Pink News Law Fair**. Pink News is a widely read LGBT+ online publication (said to be the single most widely read LGBT+ publication in the world). It has hosted an undergraduate careers conference for over 5 years, with an emphasis on openness and inclusivity in the workplace. We sponsored and had a stand at the Pink News Law Fair in October 2019. It was well attended.

13. **Recruitment Best Practice**. This is an ongoing project. A member of the E&D committee (Richard Fisher QC) has carried out some research into best recruitment practices and is producing a short paper to be shared with the E&D committee at our next meeting.

Projects aimed at progression within the profession/ practising barristers

14. ***The Silk Application and Life as a Junior Silk – a panel discussion.*** We run this event every year with ChBA and TECBAR. We have run it twice in the last year – once in June 2019 and once in January 2020. We have now moved it to be annual and in January so as to catch those who are thinking of applying in that year. We have had excellent engagement from the judiciary and the QCA and each year the panel is made up of recently appointed silks (within their first three years). It is always well attended.
15. ***Joint event with COMBAR, TECBAR, Gray’s Inn and the UK Association of Jewish Lawyers & Jurists (UKAJLJ).*** The event was called “Master of the Rolls – work, responsibilities and the Jewish connection” – a talk by Sir Terence Etherton PC. It was very well attended and the feedback was great. We are planning for a future event in spring next year.
16. ***Female retention and career progression.*** E&D plus TECBAR and ChBA E&D have been working with Rachel Kryz, an Equality & Diversity Consultant, who is leading the QCA funded Bar Council project looking at women’s retention and career progression at the Bar with a particular focus on mentoring and equitable briefing/ pay. We are awaiting her report (which was looking at the Bar as a whole).

Projects for 2020/2021

17. In addition to the projects highlighted above (many of which will continue into next year) below is a selection of matters currently on our radar.
18. ***Bridging the Bar.*** This is a new initiative looking at all under-represented groups at the Bar started by a current pupil at the GLS (who is doing his second six at Blackstone Chambers). We contacted him on 22 May and are awaiting financial proposals.
19. ***Mentoring Scheme*** – assisting the Exec with setting up a mentoring scheme for COMBAR members.
20. ***Assisting various sub-committees in light of the Lawyer Article.*** This is a project primarily being undertaken at an Exec level but E&D will be assisting in any way they can.
21. ***FreeBar events*** – COMBAR has good links with FreeBar and there was going to be another event (which are social in nature and open to all legal professionals, clerks, students) but Covid has put that on hold.

22. **Disability** – there are no projects aimed at disability issues. We are working together with TECBAR and ChBA and in the first instance are having discussions with some disability student reps at Birkbeck to consider issues in relation to access in the profession. We would also like someone to join the E&D Sub-Committee to have the disability portfolio and will advertise this vacancy in the next COMBAR newsletter.

Assistance from EXEC

23. Previously members of the E&D sub-committee have been employment specialists and have given up a considerable amount of their time to assist with updating COMBAR policies in relation to (among other things) parental leave etc. We no longer have any such specialism among our sub-committee and having discussed it we think it would be sensible that the EXEC sub-contracted that work out to an employment specialist so that they could update the policies/ produce any new policies required (if indeed any are required or whether we can simply have links on the website to Bar Council policies etc).

Ruth Hosking

Chair of the E&D Sub-Committee

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