

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2019

— 2025



## CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
1. Who We Are.....	3
2. Context and Environmental Analysis.....	6
3. Our Purposes.....	9
3.1 Education and Admission of Persons to the Profession of Barrister.....	11
3.2 Provision of Services and Support to all Our Members.....	15
4. Challenges.....	19
5. Values, Mission and Vision.....	20
6. Our Strategic Aims.....	25
6.1 Core Activities.....	25
Education.....	25
Membership Relations.....	26
6.2 Enabling Activities.....	27
Financial Health.....	27
Facilities and Information Communication Technology.....	28
Governance and Human Resources.....	29
Appendix 1.....	30

# FOREWORD

Barristers play a critical role in the administration of justice both in ensuring access by the public to our courts and other tribunals and in providing independent legal advice. King's Inns provides the essential legal training to ensure that its students on completing their studies and training are able to fulfil that role in a competent and independent manner which best serves the interests of the public.

The traditional role of the barrister as a member of an independent referral bar is changing particularly in light of the enactment of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015 and the gradual commencement of the various provisions of that Act. Increasingly, barristers may be engaged in providing legal services as part of an employment and, more recently, as a member(s) of a legal partnership. These and other changes present King's Inns with many challenges.

In order to identify these challenges, ensure the maintenance of the highest standards in legal education and training, plan for the future and represent in a meaningful manner the interests of all our members, Council has adopted a Strategic Plan covering the period 2019-2025. It is the intention of Council to keep the Plan under review to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate to all our stakeholders.

I am glad to present that Plan to you.

**Hugh O'Neill**

**Chair of Council**

The Honorable Society of King's Inns

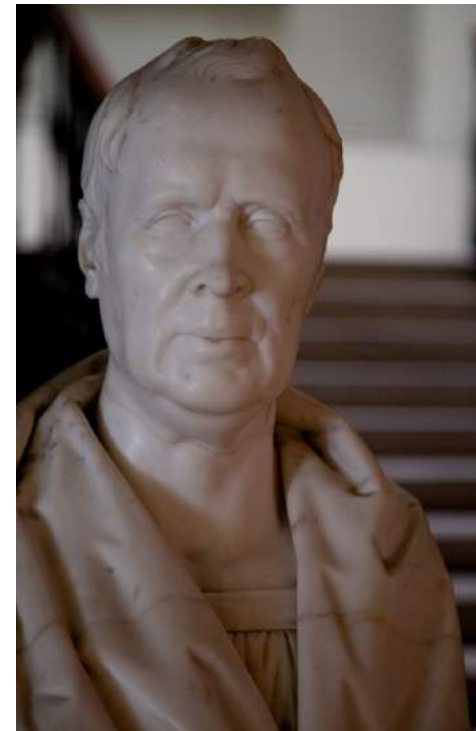
—





1.

## WHO WE ARE



Based between Henrietta Street and Constitution Hill in Dublin 1, The Honorable Society of King's Inns (King's Inns) is Ireland's Oldest School of Law and one of Ireland's significant historical environments.

Registered with the Charities Regulator of Ireland, King's Inns is a 'not-for-profit' educational institution.

Today, King's Inns is renowned for professional legal education and training across areas of the law. As well as educating future and qualified barristers, the School extends its reach to a wider community of people from non-legal backgrounds offering a wide range of accessible part-time and online courses in specialist areas of the law.

With courses taught by expert law practitioners, King's Inns students include leaders, advocates, innovators and game-changers, from industries across Ireland and abroad. The School is also a centre of excellence in promoting the use of the Irish language in the law.

Our reputation is international and eminent graduates include former Presidents of Ireland, Taoisigh, politicians, leading academics, many leaders and advocates across other professions, and, of course, judges and barristers in practise throughout the English-speaking world.

King's Inns is a magnificent venue and is available for private and corporate events, and as a location set for cinema productions and television programmes. It has over 200 years of experience in hosting and welcoming guests to our Dining Hall.

The governance structure of King's Inns comprises of Council with certain functions reserved to the Benchers. **See Appendix 1 for further details.**

In all it does, the Society aims to be effective, dynamic and modern in practice, while cherishing and integrating many of the traditions from the time of its establishment in the 16th century.

**For further information on our current activity, please visit [kingsinns.ie](https://www.kingsinns.ie)**

# AN HISTORIC LOCATION

King's Inns was formally established in 1541. It derives its name from King Henry VIII who was instrumental in ensuring that a lease of the lands at Inns Quay (where the Four Courts are now located) was transferred to the Benchers of the King's Inns. In the Middle Ages, the need for apprentice lawyers to study the common law led to the founding of hostels where they could live and study. The Inns of Court were places where law students were provided with accommodation, meals and tuition.

Until 1800, the buildings at Inns Quay provided all that was needed for life and practice at the bar. There were chambers where barristers lived and worked, a hall for eating and drinking, books for research, a chapel for prayer and gardens for recreation. When, at the end of the 18th century, the government of the day decided that it needed a building in which to house permanent courts, the noted architect, James Gandon, having just completed the Four Courts building, was commissioned by King's Inns in 1800 to design the present buildings on Constitution Hill.



Henceforward, these would be the headquarters of the Benchers and the School of Law. With the Society's move to Constitution Hill, it had been envisaged that chambers and a chapel would be built, but those plans were never executed.

King's Inns history is significant with a diverse legal and cultural heritage and a Library that houses over 110,000 volumes. We actively preserve and showcase our heritage and magnificent architecture through the many cultural and arts projects we operate.



## CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



### Political

The environment in which barristers practice their profession has changed over the years and in the last three years the pace of this change has further accelerated with the enactment of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015. The enabling of legal partnership agreements, practice as a barrister while employed, a statutory code of professional conduct and ethics, and new rules regarding advertising are some examples of these changes.



### Economic and cost pressures

As far back as the early 1800s, King's Inns was managing a shortfall in income to meet their expenditure. In fact Gandon resigned from the project because of erratic payment terms. The King's Inns found itself in such dire straits that the State eased the burden and took over what is now the Registry of Deeds.

Today, we have limited discretionary income and our costs continue to rise as we invest, grow and diversify our services. All spending needs to be carefully analysed and prudently managed in order to ensure that we achieve our overall objectives and continue to deliver the highest standards of professional legal education.

King's Inns could best be described as an 'asset rich, cash poor' institution.



### Social

Social networks are as important today as they were when the King's Inns was established. In a modern social economy, people connect in new ways and at the same time value the traditions of face to face interaction. How people view, absorb and share information has changed. Social media is prolific and online information is the norm.

Population demographics have had an impact on the supply and cost of accommodation and new forms of work that didn't exist two decades ago are now mainstream sources of employment. The pace of change is fast and it is getting faster. Since the economic downturn, there has been much narrative about leadership. In times of uncertainty, people expect leadership. In this modern society, leadership is not simply about directing, it is also about listening, being alert to people's needs and challenging the rhetoric of the day.



### Technological

As technology develops, our expectations of what it can deliver grow and expand. We expect instant response, a one stop shop, e-services, online functionality and that our data and information is protected and secure.

With improved connectivity, blended and online learning is expected. This has the possibility of opening up new markets both nationally and internationally. Traditional teaching methods and interactive classroom based learning remain necessary for skills based education and training.

King's Inns has responded well to these technology pressures offering blended learning options, online student portals for dissemination of lecture notes and personalised email accounts for all of our students.



### Environmental

Our building is a magnificent historical asset that showcases the work of the renowned architect Gandon. The building continues to be used today for the purpose for which it was built in the first decades of the 19th century. As a Society, we have an obligation to maintain the building and surroundings.

King's Inns Library is home to an important historical collection as well as providing a modern library resource to students.

We are custodians of a significant portrait collection, capturing images of Lord Chancellors / Chief Justices as far back as the 16th century.

Externally, our park and grounds, maintained by Dublin City Council provide a much used amenity for our local communities. The implications of Brexit are as yet unknown and will require ongoing review and monitoring.



### Legal

With increasing public expectations, government has responded with new regulatory requirements. Professional, institutional and behavioural regulations have commenced and consequently have placed additional compliance requirements on King's Inns.

The increasing importance of alternative dispute resolutions including mediation, arbitration and other forms of conflict resolution have broadened the skills required of barristers who are no longer exclusively focused on litigation as a method of dispute resolution.

3.

## OUR PURPOSES



## THE PRIMARY PURPOSES OF KING'S INNS ARE;

— EDUCATION AND  
ADMISSION OF PERSONS  
TO THE PROFESSION  
OF BARRISTER

— PROVISION OF  
SERVICES AND  
SUPPORT TO ALL  
OUR MEMBERS





For centuries, the legal meaning and popular understanding of a ‘barrister’ was of an advocate with a right of audience in court and this remains the case. New forms of practice are emerging. In order for a person to practise as a barrister before the Courts, they must be;

- a. Admitted by The Honorable Society of King’s Inns to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and
- b. Called to the Bar of Ireland by the Chief Justice

These two requirements are inseparable. The Chief Justice will not call a person to the Bar who has not been admitted to the degree. The only route to the Bar is via admission to the King’s Inns degree of Barrister-at-Law.

The Benchers of King’s Inns by admitting persons to the degree of Barrister-at-Law confirm to the Chief Justice that such persons are eligible and competent to practise as barristers.

The routes to admission to the degree of Barrister-at-Law are:

- King’s Inns degree course.
- Reciprocal Arrangements with the Bar of Northern Ireland.
- Recognition of qualifications gained outside the State and within the EU via the EU Recognition of Qualifications Directive.
- Transfer by solicitors in continuous practice in the State following completion of the King’s Inns three week transfer course.

# 3.1

## EDUCATION AND ADMISSION OF PERSONS TO THE PROFESSION OF BARRISTER



# THE DEGREE OF BARRISTER-AT-LAW IS A PROFESSIONAL RATHER THAN AN ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION. IT EVIDENCES THE ADMISSION OF A PERSON TO THE STATUS OF BARRISTER.

This right to admit a person as a barrister is conferred on the Benchers by the Common Law. The Legal Practitioners (Qualification) Act 1929 recognised in statute the relationship between admission to the degree and call to the Bar ‘...nothing shall prevent the Chief Justice from admitting to practise as a Barrister-at-Law in the Courts of Saorstát na hÉireann any member ... who has been admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law by the Benchers of The Honorable Society of King’s Inns’.

The Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015 requires all barristers who have been called to the Bar and who intend to provide legal services as barristers to apply to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority to have their name entered on the Roll of Practising Barristers.

## Our Independence

Throughout our history we have maintained our independence as an institution. This has afforded us freedom and provided opportunity for us to debate and discuss topics of public interest.

## Our Strength

As the oldest school of professional legal education in Ireland, and indeed one of the oldest higher education institutions, the King’s Inns has a long service to legal education, the legal system and the profession of Barrister-at-Law. It has great strengths. Our members, students and staff are dedicated and committed. Our teaching staff are subject matter experts: practising barristers with first-hand knowledge and practical experience of the Irish legal system.

Our Benchers have strong networks and links nationally and internationally. Our lecturers are the most experienced and senior members of the legal community.

## Education

Our education function could be categorised as

- Substantive academic phase through our Diploma in Legal Studies
- Professional Education and Training through our degree of Barrister-at-Law
- Post Qualification / Continuing Education through our Advanced Diplomas

We have a strong brand and reputation for quality legal education. We have access to the finest legal practitioners who are specialists and masters in every aspect of the law. We are very well respected as a School of Law and our Advanced Diploma Programmes are in high demand.

In other words we have market credibility and a proven track record. The King’s Inns is the recognised place to attend to gain a deeper, up-to-date and considered legal education with a professional focus or to maintain ones knowledge, skills and competence.

Admission to our Professional Barrister-at-Law Education Programme is by an entrance examination. An applicant must hold an approved third level law degree, postgraduate diploma or the Society’s Diploma in Legal Studies and must have passed a number of identified subjects and sit an entrance exam in other core subjects.

There has been no real growth in the numbers being admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law over the last ten years. There may be a number of factors contributing to this which need to be identified and addressed.

The Diploma in Legal Studies is a two-year part-time course involving the study of substantive law. It is primarily a course for those who do not hold a law degree, but who want to become barristers. However, it also caters for students who do not wish to become barristers but wish to acquire a legal qualification from King’s Inns. The categories of applicants eligible to apply for entrance to the diploma course are broad, namely:—

- Graduate applicant – holder of a degree from a third level educational institution
- Mature applicant – an applicant who does not hold a degree and is at least 23 years of age.

## Fellowships, Scholarships, Bursaries and Prizes

King’s Inns offers a limited number of Fellowships, Scholarships, Bursaries and Prizes to students at King’s Inns.

Through these funds, the King’s Inns provides financial support to students who might not otherwise be able to pursue their study of the law or their ambitions to become a barrister. These funds have varied over the years and we see them as an essential element.

The degree of Barrister-at-Law course qualifies for postgraduate funding under Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI).





## 3.2

# PROVISION OF SERVICES & SUPPORT TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS

Our members can be grouped under the following broad categories:

- Practising barristers who are members of the Law Library
- Practising barristers who are not members of the Law Library
- Benchers, including elected Bar Benchers, ex officio Judicial Benchers (who include all judges of the Superior Courts) and Honorary Benchers
- Circuit Court and District Court judges who have been admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law
- Qualified barristers who do not come within any of the above four categories
- Degree of Barrister-at-Law students who have paid tuition fees

# PROVISION OF SERVICES & SUPPORT TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS



## A Changing Profession

Subscribing members may avail of commons and use the Society's Library or other premises. All members are entitled to become subscribing members.

### There is scope to increase the role of members and become a fully functioning membership organisation.

Traditionally all barristers entering professional practice became members of the Law Library and The Bar of Ireland was their professional body. This has now changed and it is no longer a requirement for practising barristers to be a member of the Law Library. For this reason, King's Inns has been designated a professional body under the Legal Services Regulation Act. This presents a new challenge and at the same time, an opportunity for King's Inns to support members who fall into this category.

New categories of practising barristers are emerging with the commencement of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority legislation. These include practising members in public and private sector employment. It also includes barristers practising in partnership or as sole practitioners who are not members of the Law Library.

By facilitating events for members, some of which are organised by for example, The Bar of Ireland, the Medico Legal Society and the Irish Women Lawyers Association, we deepen the connection and strengthen the relationship with our members.

In a modern society, the role of the profession is changing and is no longer confined to the traditional barrister advisory and advocacy role. Practising barristers may now be employed and the value of the professional barrister skills in industry and the public sector is becoming increasingly visible.

This brings with it, the need for further skills development which as the educator of the profession, the King's Inns is well placed to meet.

New entrants to the profession, who practise as part of the independent referral Bar face many challenges in establishing their practice. It can take many years before income levels reach even minimum wage. Other aspects of the practice of law provide more lucrative income streams which leads to the profession competing for talent because of this. The profession now needs to address this and build support for young members starting out. This is challenging as we must also take due account of the independent referral nature of the traditional barrister's role.



## Working with The Bar of Ireland

The Bar of Ireland and King's Inns traditionally enjoyed very good relations. Mutual respect, co-operation and support for the profession underpin this relationship. Whilst the King's Inns provides professional training and education through the degree of Barrister-at-Law course and thereby prepares candidates for entry to the profession, The Bar of Ireland provides ongoing support throughout their professional career in the form of library services and continuing professional development for those that join the Law Library. It is important for the profession that The Bar of Ireland and King's Inns continue to work together to promote the profession and attract the brightest and best candidates to enter the barrister profession.

King's Inns envisages that The Bar of Ireland would continue to be the primary professional body for those practising barristers who are members of the independent referral bar and Law Library.

There is scope for increased overlap between King's Inns and The Bar of Ireland in terms of post qualification training and continuous professional development, particularly in the first two years after qualifying. King's Inns should continue to be involved to bring on and build on the foundation Barrister-at-Law education and training. It may also have a special role in relation to practising barristers who are not members of the Law Library.

We maintain relationships with our counterparts in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. Reciprocal mooting events with The Bar of Northern Ireland are just one example of how we do this.



## 4.

# CHALLENGES

### King's Inns School of Law

The continued enhancement of King's Inns School of Law and our role in professional education of barristers in the new environment is a significant challenge.

### Member Services

Providing services for our members, taking account of the new ways in which barristers may practise. This will require ongoing commitment and active involvement from all of our members.

### Our Built Environment

While King's Inns benefits from historic and beautiful surroundings, those same surroundings present challenges in terms of limited accessibility for those with physical disabilities. The number of lecture rooms and tutorial rooms limits our total overall capacity.

### Investment Funding

In order to facilitate access to professional legal education, King's Inns has operated at a loss or break even for many years. Our day to day finances enable us to deliver what we currently offer.

We receive no state funding for the institution. We do not have any philanthropic foundation and do not receive any significant charitable donations for King's Inns. Limited funds are contributed towards scholarships for students and we always welcome funding for this purpose. King's Inns must investigate ways of ensuring financial security for the future.

**VALUES,  
MISSION  
& VISION**

**IN ALL OUR ACTIVITIES,  
WE VALUE**

**— EXCELLENCE  
INDEPENDENCE  
ETHOS  
EFFECTIVENESS  
RELEVANCE  
& CHANGE**

**MISSION  
AND VISION**

**TO EXCEL  
TO DEVELOP  
TO NURTURE**

**Mission**

To excel in the provision of both professional and academic legal education and training, and to develop and nurture lifelong relationships with our entire membership.

**Vision**

To further develop King's Inns as a modern twenty-first century institution, which is a centre of excellence in the provision of legal education and training, and to have a value and significance for its membership who promote the importance of the rule of law in a modern democracy.



# UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL



# 6.

## OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

### Core Activities

# 6.1

#### Education

To further develop and enhance our School of Law as the premier professional legal education centre in Ireland.

In developing our education offering, the degree of Barrister-at-Law and the Diploma in Legal Studies will continue to be core.

- We will broaden our education offering, particularly our advanced diploma range, to provide high quality legal education or continuing legal education to a wide range of professionals.
- We will explore opportunities for inter disciplinary and collaborative learning.
- We recognise there are two sides to the same coin of education - the student experience and the teaching experience. We aim to create a social and learning environment which is nurturing, supportive and inclusive while maintaining high standards.
- It is our aim to attract the highest calibre candidates to study at King's Inns. We will actively work to demonstrate the opportunities available to graduates of King's Inns, to demystify the profession while making it plain that high standards are essential.
- We will develop and extend our scholarships and bursaries. We will increase publicity about these and invite our members and members of the public to contribute.

- We will enhance our existing outreach work through the law schools in universities and colleges and further extend our reach to schools.
- We support and encourage equality of opportunity and will continue to do so.
- We will provide high quality teaching of the most up-to-date material using modern and appropriate methods of teaching and delivery.
- We will preserve the ethos and traditions of the King's Inns to imbue values of collegiality, integrity, respect and diligence in graduates. Ethos is instilled by exposure of students to members of the profession and the judiciary.
- We will develop a programme of pre-dinner talks that demonstrate the scope of day-to-day responsibilities of barristers in a wide range of practice areas and the advancement of the rule of law in society.
- We will seek to foster a long term commitment and loyalty to the profession and King's Inns.
- We will foster a network of volunteers, drawing on members and alumni (such as graduates of our diploma and advanced diploma courses) to give back to King's Inns.
- With the advent of Brexit, Ireland will be the only common law jurisdiction in the European Union. We will seek to leverage opportunities at European level that will benefit King's Inns and our members.

## Core Activities

## 6.1

## Membership Relations

**King's Inns is a professional body. This was further recognised by the provisions of the LSRA Act. We have a role as a professional body for practising barristers that are not members of the Law Library.**

- We will develop our offerings to our members and alumni to ensure King's Inns ongoing relevance for all.
- We will continue to work collaboratively with the Bar of Ireland to develop post qualifying training and education opportunities that will support members in the changing nature of the profession.
- We will develop our relationship, in particular with our members who are practising barristers and are not members of the independent referral Bar.
- We will develop and launch a members' engagement strategy so as to encourage all members to play a full part in the life of King's Inns.
- King's Inns will examine what better support systems are needed by barristers in their first year of practise after they are called to the Bar.

- We will continue and enhance the tradition of dining and commons to promote collegiality amongst all subscribing members and their relationship with King's Inns.
- We will work with our food and events partner to define a strategy for increasing member engagement and attendance.
- We will continue to build our relationships with the community.

## Enabling Activities

## 6.2

## Financial Health

- We will strengthen our financial base.
- We will investigate and identify opportunities to generate new sources of income whilst maximising the income generation potential of our existing services.
- We will ensure that the King's Inns obtains value for money in all areas of its operations.
- We will build our reserves as we recognise that the King's Inns buildings require investment if they are to continue to serve our activities.
- We will prepare annual budget plans to reflect strategic objectives based upon affordability constraints.
- We will manage our costs by carrying out regular procurement processes, comparing and reviewing costs.
- We will maintain our rental income at open market value for lease renewals and rent reviews subject to Residential Tenancy Board Regulations.
- We will safeguard our tax position.
- We will seek to promote endowments consistent with our charitable status and judicial membership.

## Enabling Activities

# 6.2

### Facilities and Information Communication Technology

- We will preserve our unique buildings and architecture.
- We aim to maximise our facilities and built environment to support our vision and mission in providing high quality education, training and experience for all of our members.
- We are conscious that we need to improve physical access for all and we will continue to explore all options within financial limitations.
- We will promote the use of our facilities for external events, conferences and films consistent with our overall purpose and ethos.
- We will continue to invest in our conservation programme to conserve our historical collections.
- We will use information technology to provide as flexible a service as possible to our students.
- We will further expand the online delivery of our education and training courses.
- Where possible, we will provide services online.
- We will maintain a strong, appropriate technical infrastructure.
- We will explore cloud based solutions i.e. externally hosted consistent with GDPR.
- We will continue to develop our online and web based services enabling self-service where possible.
- We will invest in a new membership management system.
- We will identify solutions and processes that will enable us gain efficiencies in routine tasks and enable our staff to better use their knowledge and skills.

## Enabling Activities

# 6.2

### Governance and Human Resources

- We will maintain a governance structure which balances oversight and supervision of the executive and at the same time works with and supports the achievement of our strategic objectives.
- We will ensure the Society's Rules are kept up-to-date and reviewed on a regular basis.
- We will ensure all new Benchers, Council and Committee Members receive appropriate induction and are aware of their role.
- We will comply with relevant regulatory legislation i.e. Legal Services Regulation Act, Charities Regulator, Lobbying Act, GDPR.
- We value our staff, their flexibility and commitment. We will set goals and review progress.
- We will prioritise development of key skills to deliver on this strategy statement and we will invest in relevant training and development.
- We will maintain a supportive, safe and positive work environment for our staff.



## GOVERNANCE

### The Honorable Society of King's Inns

<b>Council (43)</b>			<b>Benchers (134)</b>		
			Disciplinary	Fine Arts	General
Standing	Education	Commons	Professional Practice	Library	Graduate Members
	Accreditation				

The governance structure of King's Inns can be traced back to its establishment in the 16th century.

The governing body of the Society was composed of the 'Benchers' – who included, the Lord Chancellor, judges and senior members of the Bar. The main function of the Benchers was the regulation of admission to the legal profession, while other functions related to the appointment of the Treasurer and other officers, discipline of barristers, leases of property and approval of building works.

Today, the functions of the Benchers include

- Conferring the degree of Barrister-at-Law
- Presiding at Commons
- The disbarment for disciplinary reasons, or at her or his request, of a barrister
- Providing certificates of "good standing" to barristers wishing to transfer to the solicitors' profession
- Dealing with complaints of professional misconduct and other disciplinary matters

In the mid 1970s the Council of King's Inns was established. Four main constituencies now make up Council which comprises 43 members. Membership is balanced between Judicial Benchers, Bar Benchers, the Professional Body Panel (currently The Bar of Ireland) and the Practising Bar Panel.

Relationships between Benchers, Council and Committees are fundamental to the effective functioning of the King's Inns. We currently have 134 Benchers, 43 members of Council and a number of Committees/ Working Groups that support the work of the Society.

The Committees deal with the following matters:—

- Finance, buildings and general purposes
- The education of students and further education of barristers
- The Society's Library
- Professional practices
- Commons, recreation and social affairs
- Matters affecting non-practising barristers

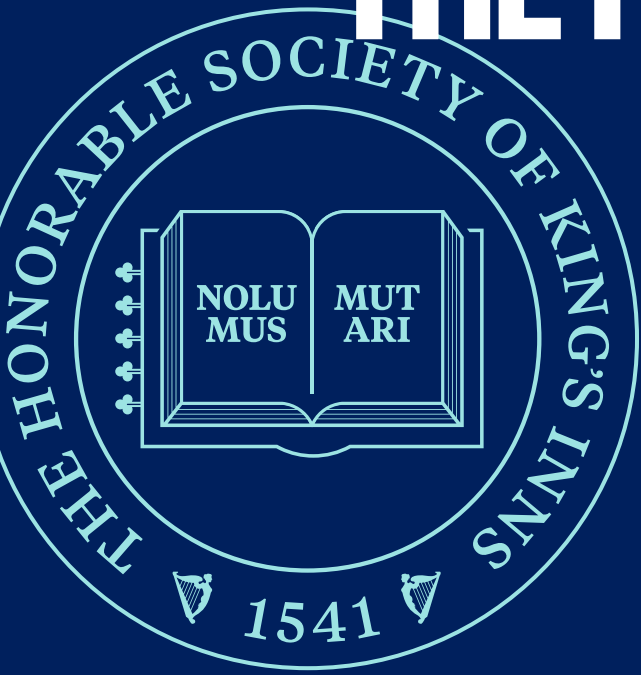
The driver for the establishment of Council was financial need. At the time, it was agreed that The Bar of Ireland should support King's Inns and in return would have active participation in its governance.

In the 1970s, the Benchers transferred the management of the affairs of the Society to Council reserving the functions of admission to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and disciplinary matters.





# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



**KINGS**  
**INNS**<sup>15</sup><sub>41</sub>

+3531874 4840 [kingsinns.ie](http://kingsinns.ie)