

ACT Bar Association Reading Program Rules

DEFINITIONS

1. These Rules for the Reading Program are made by the Bar Council and may be cited as the Reading Rules. Unless the context requires otherwise:

Act	means the <i>Legal Profession Act 2006</i> (ACT) in force from time to time.
ACT Barristers' Rules	means the <i>Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules 2026</i> (ACT) in force from time to time.
Bar Association	means the Australian Capital Territory Bar Association (ACN 008 481 258), a corporation incorporated under the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth).
Bar Council	means the Council of the Bar Association.
Bar Exam	means the examination required by the NSW Bar Association to be passed prior to a person undertaking the NSW Bar Practice Course. Note: That exam covers ethics, rules of evidence, and rules of procedure.
barrister practicing certificate	means a barrister practicing certificate granted by the Bar Council pursuant to s 45 of the Act.
Certificate of Attendance	means a certificate signed by each barrister with whom the Reader appeared for Civil Reading and Criminal Reading days which sets out: (a) the name of the matter, (b) the nature of the matter, (c) the court in which the matter was heard or listed to be heard; (d) the nature of the Reader's participation; (e) the category of the matter in terms of the Civil or Criminal Reading as the case may be; and (f) the number of days for which the Reader participated.
Civil Reading	means 10 days undertaken by the Reader in which the Reader participates with a Tutor, or barrister approved by the Tutor, in the following:

	(a) not less than five (5) days in final hearings; (b) not more than three (3) days for opposed interlocutory matters, including applications for leave to appeal; (c) not more than three (3) days before a Tribunal, Arbitrator or an Inquiry (including a Coronial Inquiry); (d) not more than three (3) days for the hearing of appeals; (e) not more than three (3) days for preparation towards a final hearing; (f) not more than one (1) day participating in a mediation, as long as the mediation lasts for more than 3 hours.
CPD	means Continuing Professional Development and includes any educational courses provided by a Law Society or Bar Association and may be provided under the name of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) or such similar title.
Criminal Reading	means 10 days undertaken by the Reader in which the Reader participates with a Tutor, or barrister approved by the Tutor in the following: (a) not less than five (5) days in criminal trials; (b) not more than three (3) days in committal proceedings; (c) not more than three (3) days reading on either hearing of appeals or applications for leave to appeal (including special leave to appeal); (d) not more than three (3) days for preparation of criminal trials; (e) any day set aside for trial, a committal or an appellate hearing which does not proceed or lasts less than two (2) hours does not count towards a day of Criminal Reading.
Exemption Policy	means the policy approved by the Bar Council from time to time for granting exemptions from some or all of: the requirements for the grant of a reader practicing certificate, the requirements of the Reading Program under these Reading Rules, or the requirements for the grant of a barrister practicing certificate.
Extenuating Circumstances	includes (but is not limited to) the person's caring responsibilities, an illness or injury affecting the person, family and domestic violence experienced by the person, or the death of a member of the person's immediate family or household.
NSW Bar Practice Course	means the course approved by the NSW Bar Association for readers in New South Wales. <i>Note: Details of the NSW Bar Association Reading Program are available through the NSW Bar Association (www.nswbar.asn.au)</i>
Reader	means a person who has been granted a reader practising certificate by the Bar Council.
reader practicing certificate	means a barrister practicing certificate which is subject to readers' conditions.

readers' conditions	means the condition that the person completes the Reading Program in accordance with these Reading Rules together with any other condition imposed by the Bar Council in accordance with s 46 of the Act.
Reading Period	means the period commencing on the day the reader's practising certificate is issued and continuing for 12 months from that day or for a longer time as determined by the Bar Council under these Reading Rules.
Reading Program	means the program of instruction for a Reader set out in paragraph 5 and subject to these Reading Rules.
Rule	means a rule of the ACT Barristers' Rules. .
Tutor	means a barrister eligible to be a Tutor under these Reading Rules and approved by the Bar Council to supervise and teach a reader the skills to engage in legal practice as a barrister.

ELIGIBILITY

2. In addition to the eligibility requirements in s 41(2) of the Act, a person is eligible to apply to the Bar Council for a reader practicing certificate if the person:
 - (a) has passed the Bar Exam within the preceding 15 months or, if the Bar Council is satisfied that there are Extenuating Circumstances, such longer period as the Bar Council in its discretion determines; or
 - (b) has previously been granted a reader practicing certificate which expired less than two years before the date of applying for the new reader practicing certificate; or
 - (c) nominates, at the time of applying for a reader practicing certificate, one or more eligible people to act as the person's Tutor(s).
3. The Bar Council will consider a person's application for a reader practicing certificate at its next available meeting and will advise the person within 7 days of that meeting of its decision.
4. If the Bar Council determines to grant a reader practicing certificate, it will endorse the reader practicing certificate with words to the following effect:

"The holder of this Practising Certificate is subject to the conditions and restrictions imposed upon barristers undertaking the Reading Program pursuant to the Legal Profession (Barrister's) Rules 2026 and the ACT Bar Association Reading Program Rules"

READING PROGRAM

5. A Reader must-
 - (a) unless the Bar Council approves otherwise (including if the Bar Council is satisfied that there are Extenuating Circumstances), complete the NSW Bar Practice Course during the first 6 months of the Reading Period and obtain a letter of completion or equivalent from the NSW Bar Association to be provided to the Bar Council;
 - (b) obtain their reader practicing certificate prior to commencement of the NSW Bar Practice Course;¹
 - (c) not practice during the period of the NSW Bar Practice Course;

¹ This rule was implemented in June 2026 however will not be enforced until the May 2027 NSW Bar Practice Course.

- (d) for the first 3 months of the Reading Period, not appear as a barrister in any court or tribunal except with the approval of the Reader's Tutor;
 - (e) over the course of the Reading Period, undertake the following activities to the satisfaction of the Reader's Tutor:
 - (i) complete the Civil Reading and the Criminal Reading, and obtain Certificates of Attendance for each day thereof to be provided to the Bar Council;
 - (ii) apply a barrister's ethical obligations to the Reader's practice;
 - (iii) demonstrate an understanding and application of evidence law;
 - (iv) draft two civil pleadings; and
 - (v) draft at least two advices;
 - (f) comply with any instruction or direction given by the Tutor with respect to the Reader's practise as a barrister; and
 - (g) comply with any CPD requirements prescribed by the Bar Council.
6. For the avoidance of doubt, completion of the NSW Bar Practice Course will satisfy the Reader's CPD requirements for the relevant CPD year.

EXEMPTIONS

7. A person may, when applying for a reader practicing certificate, request that the Bar Council grant an exemption pursuant to the Exemption Policy from:
- (a) the eligibility requirement in paragraph 2 above, or
 - (b) some or all of the requirements of the Reading Program in paragraph 5 above.

COSTS OF BAR PRACTICE COURSE

8. Where a Reader or prospective Reader is unable to meet, or may experience difficulty meeting, the upfront costs required to undertake the Reading Program, including the costs involved in interstate travel and attendance at the NSW Bar Practice Course, the Bar Council may, if a Reader requests, approve that the Bar Association pay the NSW Bar Practice Course fee on the Reader's behalf provided:
- (a) that the Reader will fully reimburse the Bar Association, without any imposition of interest, by way of quarterly instalments invoiced by the Bar Association to the Reader over the following 12 months or such longer period as may be agreed between the Bar Association and the Reader; and
 - (b) if the Bar Council later approves a Reader's grant for the Reader pursuant to paragraph 17 below, the Reader may receive these funds directly or request that the Bar Association apply the funds towards any remaining instalments for repayment of the NSW Bar Practice Course fee made by the Bar Association on the Reader's behalf.

EXTENSIONS TO THE READING PERIOD

9. A Reader may apply to the Bar Council for an extension of the Reader's Reading Period.
10. A Reader, in applying to the Bar Council for an extension, must—
- (a) state the reasons requiring the need for the extension; and
 - (b) include a written statement from the Reader's Tutor supporting the application for extension.

Note: Reasons for seeking an extension may include Extenuating

Circumstances.

11. The Bar Council may, on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit, grant an extension to the Reading Period of up to 24 months.
12. The Bar Council will apply a late fee of \$750.00 if an extension of the Reader's Reading Period is requested, unless the Bar Council is satisfied that Extenuating Circumstances warrant waiver of the fee.

TUTORS

13. A barrister is eligible to be a Reader's Tutor if the barrister:
 - (a) is not Senior Counsel; and
 - (b) has been a barrister for at least 7 years, or has had relevant experience that the Bar Council considers appropriate; and
 - (c) has no more than one other Reader (unless approved by Bar Council).
14. A Tutor must, with all reasonable skill and diligence, instruct their Reader in:
 - (a) the art of advocacy;
 - (b) barristers' work;
 - (c) the proper conduct of a barrister's practice;
 - (d) the ethical standards required of a barrister, including complying with the ACT Barristers' Rules; and
 - (e) the Reading Program.
15. A Tutor must:
 - (a) make arrangements for the Reader to attend the Tutor in chambers to be shown, and to assist in, chamber work from time to time;
 - (b) make arrangements for the Reader to appear with the Tutor in court as an observer;
 - (c) ensure that the Reader is attending to any necessary or appropriate courses of instruction arranged by the Bar Association or the Australian Bar Association;
 - (d) introduce the Reader to the Tutor's colleagues; and
 - (e) assist the Reader in the Reader's professional development as a barrister.

READERS' GRANTS

16. From time to time, the Bar Council approves payments of grants for the purposes of financially assisting Readers with the costs of undertaking the NSW Bar Practice Course or such other course as the Bar Council approves, provided that the Reader intends to practise primarily in the ACT for at least a period of 12 months after completion of the Reading Program.
17. The Bar Council may approve the payment of a Reader's grant in such sum as it determines in its absolute discretion from time to time, to a Reader who applies to the Bar Council and who satisfies the Bar Council that they:
 - (a) have already completed or intend to complete the NSW Bar Practice Course, or such other Course as the Bar Council approves, within the following 6 months; and
 - (b) intend to practise primarily in the ACT for at least 12 months following their completion of the Reading Program.

18. A person is only eligible for payment of one Reader's grant.
19. Unless the Bar Council decides otherwise upon being satisfied of special circumstances, a person will be expected to repay funds paid to them as a Reader's grant if they:
 - (a) do not successfully complete the NSW Bar Practice Course or such other Course as the Bar Council approves within 6 months of receiving the funds; or
 - (b) do not successfully complete the Reading Program within 12 months of its commencement or within such longer period as is covered by an extension approved by the Bar Council under these Reading Rules; or
 - (c) do not practise primarily in the ACT for at least 12 months following their completion of the Reading Program.
20. The Chief Executive Officer of the Bar Association must widely publicise the availability of the Readers' grants and the process for applying for funds, including to those who may be considering applying for a reader practicing certificate. .

COMPLETION

21. A Reader has satisfied the reading requirements if the Reader has completed—
 - (a) the Reading Program; and
 - (b) the Reading Period.
22. When the Reader has satisfied the reading requirements, each Tutor for that Reader, to the extent the Tutor can do so, must provide a letter to the Bar Council to certify that the Reader has:
 - (a) performed satisfactorily as a Reader;
 - (b) is fit to hold a barrister practising certificate without readers' conditions; and
 - (c) satisfactorily completed the activities in paragraph 5(e) above.
23. The Bar Council may, at its discretion, ask the Reader and any Tutor of the Reader to provide such further information as the Bar Council reasonably requires so that the Bar Council can determine whether the Reader has satisfactorily completed the Reading Program.
24. Where the Bar Council requests further information, that information must be supplied within 14 days of the request.

Approved by Bar Council, 24 September 2026