

THE MANX BAR EXAMS – END OF AN ERA

AND

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN HODGSON AND BOB LEE

23 November 2023 marked the last ever meeting of the Examiners under the “old” system for the admission of articulated clerks (trainee advocates) to the Manx Bar. That system has now been completely replaced by that set out in the Advocates Admission Regulations 2022. Under this new system responsibility for setting and marking the examinations passes to the Council of the Isle of Man Law Society. Under the “old” system, in place since 1987 and largely unchanged for many years before then, the Examiners were the First and Second Deemsters, assisted by two highly experienced academics, John Hodgson and Robert (Bob) Lee. John and Bob played a key role in assisting with the setting and marking of these important examinations.

John Hodgson is an Associate Professor at Nottingham Law School and Bob Lee is Professor of Law at Birmingham Law School. They have fulfilled the roles of examination advisers to the Deemsters for over 25 years and have also played a key role in the introduction of the new, improved syllabus under the 2022 Regulations. Indeed they will continue to play an important role in the new system by acting as “Scrutineers” to oversee the advocates’ examination process so as to ensure the fairness and consistency of examinations of the candidates.

However, the Deemsters will no longer have the responsibility for setting and marking the examinations. That now falls to the Council of the Isle of Man Law Society who have entered into agreements with the Jersey Institute of Law to produce for the first time authoritative study guides and a structured teaching programme for aspiring advocates.

The First Deemster is particularly pleased to note these developments which mark the culmination of a process which began with a meeting which he had in Jersey with Professor Claire De Than of the Jersey Law Institute in 2019. It was the subsequent production of a paper by Professor De Than on Legal Education Models in Small British Jurisdictions which has ultimately led to the reforms which are now in place.

It is also right to acknowledge the role played by Professor Peter Edge of Oxford Brookes University in formulating the reforms. The Deemsters also wish to place on the record their thanks to Alexander Armstrong, the Courts’ legal officer who has done a great deal to implement the reforms on behalf of

the Deemsters in conjunction with the Law Society. Their thanks extend also to John Kennish and Lynn McMechan who have faultlessly administered this important examination system over many years.

The Deemsters and the Chief Registrar wish especially to place on record their thanks for the role played by Professors Hodgson and Lee in maintaining the high standards expected of those who sit the Manx Bar examinations. They very much hope that they may continue to be involved in the Manx Bar examination system and contribute to the development of academic study into Manx law and that their extensive knowledge of Manx law will continue to benefit the Island.