



MTYBA 2020 Coronavirus Hardship Grants

Summary

In March 2020, immediately after realising the impact that Coronavirus (Covid-19) would have on the Junior Bar, MTYBA set up a Hardship Fund. Some of the funds were repurposed from other areas. MTYBA invited applications from eligible members, which were reviewed by an independent panel. The panel also determined the appropriate level of award to grant to each successful applicant, out of the pre-approved budget.

MTYBA would have loved to have been able to help everyone, but there were several applications and the funds were quite limited. Details of the process are described in this article. MTYBA awarded a total of 13 grants (from 34 eligible applications), and each grant amount ranged from £250 to £505. Awards were granted to five tenants and to eight members who have yet to arrange pupillage, with Call dates ranging from 2015 to 2019.

Applications invited

MTYBA President [Michael Polak wrote on 22 March 2020 to all MTYBA members](#), setting out MTYBA's plan to make hardship grants for those in need. He acknowledged the precarious financial position faced by MTYBA members, many who are self-employed and do not have large savings.

On 21 May 2020, when lockdown was lessening, MTYBA again recognised that the financial difficulties many of our members were facing in the time of Covid-19 might be the same or worse than before. MTYBA announced that Middle Temple had kindly covered some of the previous hardship awards granted by MTYBA. In combination with this and a generous donation from an anonymous donor, MTYBA was able to open a second-round of hardship grants.

Deadline and eligibility

For the first round of grants, MTYBA set a deadline of 5 April 2020 and limited eligibility to two types of members: those who had yet to arrange pupillage and those who were tenants. The reason for this was that MTYBA members who had already arranged or were already in pupillage, including third six pupils (now called probationary pupils) were eligible for the [Middle Temple Pupil and Student Hardship Fund](#).

For the second round of grants, MTYBA further targeted those MTYBA members who had not yet arranged pupillage. In addition, MTYBA reminded those who had arranged pupillage or who were in pupillage (including third six) to apply for the [Middle Temple Pupil and Student Hardship Fund Awards](#), provided by the Education Department of Middle Temple, and reminded those members who had held a brief that they would be eligible for the [Barristers' Benevolent Association \(BBA\) fund](#).

Applications received

MTYBA received a total of 25 applications in its first round. Some were either withdrawn, or from outside the eligibility criteria, including some student members (who are not yet members of MTYBA) and some current pupils. Of the remaining 18 eligible applications, approximately 60% were from junior tenants and 40% were pre-pupillage. MTYBA also received some indications of interest that were not followed by application forms.

In its second round, MTYBA received 18 applications of which 16 were eligible, and some which were applications from applicants in the first round who had not received grants. As mentioned above, eligible application in the second round were those from MTYBA members who had not yet arranged pupillage (i.e., they were "pre-pupillage").

Grants awarded

Our independent panel, comprised of Master McCullough and Karen Reid (Chair of Hall Committee), had discretion about how to spend the £2,000 initially budgeted. They discussed the anonymised applications received and in the first round, decided to grant eight awards of £250 each. The successful applicants in Round One were comprised of 37.5% pre-pupils and 62.5% tenants. The grants were received by the successful applicants by 17 April 2020.

The same panel, comprised of Master McCullough and Karen Reid, reviewed the anonymised applications from the second round. Using the discretion about how to spend the budget of the second round, they awarded five grants of between £370 to £505, totalling £2,250.

Other assistance available

MTYBA hopes that its members may be assisted by other funds. As set out in [Master Treasurer's message of 17 April 2020](#), the Inns (and particularly Middle Temple) are working hard to support those in need. For practising members of the Bar, the Inns have agreed to work through the Barristers' Benevolent Association (BBA) and have committed a sum to that appeal. In addition, to support those members of the Inn who are not eligible for assistance from the BBA, including students and pupils, Middle Temple continues to offer the Pupil and Student Hardship fund.