THE FACULTY OFFICE

The Faculty Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury

Registrar's Annual Report 2026 (for the year ended 31 March 2026)

Size of the profession

In the practising year ended 31 October 2025, 760 notaries had a current practising certificate (up from 755 in practising year 2024 and 743 in practising year 2023).

However, in the current practising year to 31 October 2026, 777 notaries took out a practising certificate; 71 individuals eligible to apply did not submit an application for a practising certificate. (Up from 54 last year.)

During the course of the calendar year 2025 the Master admitted 51 new notaries – so the growth of numbers in the profession is being maintained with once again a small increase. In addition, the Master has also admitted 7 new notaries so far in 2025/26; we have also been advised that 41 students have successfully passed the UCL course at the first sitting with more likely to follow after the second/retake exam. Of these, 21 have already submitted their application for admission.

In the practising year ended 31 October 2025, notaries had a current practising certificate (up from 755 in practising year 2024 and 743 in practising year 2023).

Regulatory work

The Faculty Office's priorities are included in our Business Plan (2025-2028) which covers the year this report pertains to and the latest Action plan is published on the Faculty Office website. They have been grouped into the regulatory objectives. We review progress against our plan at the Master's Quarterly Council meetings. We are pleased that much has been achieved during the period. The 2025-2028 priorities included in the Business Plan were announced for consultation at the 2025 Forum on the 10th July 2025.

One highlight during the past year as part of the Faculty Office's commitment to education we held a high profile and well attended lecture on the Rule of Law, and

Professor Stephen Mayson spoke powerfully on a lecture entitled I will Act Uprightly and Justly": Notaries Public, the Rule of law and Ethical Integrity. We look forward to hearing from Professor Eloise Scotford on Legal Education; is it fit for purpose? on 8th September 2026.

We also had a priority of maintaining a Faculty Office's reserves to the equivalent of six months expenditure. With prudent budgeting and controlled expenditure, we have achieved this last year and have increased the reserves. The operating reserve currently stands at £428,522 which is now over the six months of the budgeted expenditure for the current year. We are in the process of reviewing our reserves policy.

Sonnet undertook a detailed report into diversity, equity and inclusion issues facing notaries and their clients. A summary of this report and its recommendations is available on the Faculty Office Website.

Complaints

During the reporting period, the Faculty Office received 36 complaints concerning notaries public. (25 of these Complaints were against the same notary) . Of these, 26 cases were closed due to insufficient evidence of notarial misconduct. Two cases were resolved through the Approved Procedure, and a further three cases were closed on the basis that there was no case to answer. Two cases were referred to the Court of Faculties, and three cases remain ongoing.

Decisions of the Court of Faculties issued during the reporting period can be found on our website.

The Faculty Office received no formal complaints concerning its own services during this period. However, feedback was received regarding the inspection's process, and this will be considered under one of the Master's Priorities.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board met on four occasions in the period covered by this report under its Chair, Michael Heap.

The major items on the agenda were our review of Faculty Office Policies; LA-tech and AI; the Review of the LSB; the Notaries Accounts Rules; Draft Notaries (Post Admission Supervision and Training Rules- Consultation ; Review of Insurance Arrangements; review of the Chapters in the Code of Practice on Electronic Documents and Remote Appearance ; a discussion on Board training needs; a review of draft digital standards for verifying identity; Post qualification supervision of probate and conveyancing ; AML / OPBAS updates; E-signatures/E-apostille issues re married women/surnames ; review of the amended Conduct and Discipline Rules; review of the working parties on the future of notarial work and AI working party.

Qualifications Board

The Qualifications Board met on seven occasions in the period covered by this report. In total, 121 Certificates of Exemption were issued in the April 25 – March 26 period; the 73 additional Certificates to those detailed above being candidates who met conditions required by the Board and supplied details of the same to the Faculty Office.

The Board's chief concern this year has been a fourth successive year of an unprecedented number of applications, with UCL also dealing with the largest year (Year 1 2024-25, then Year 2 2025-26) on record. While proportionally failures in exams have remained level, the size of the year means that inevitably that proportion is made up of more people.

Some concerns over the academic level of students being admitted to the course have arisen during the year, with moves being made by both the Faculty Office and UCL to address this. A language and reasoning test may soon be a prerequisite for all applicants. An ethics module will also be added to the NPC. May I thank UCL for the way it engages with the Faculty Office so constructively. The considerable growth of the number of entrants entering the profession is very good news for the profession's long-term future but has also presented inevitable challenges.

In addition to scrutinising applications for Certificates of Exemption the Board also considered the report by Law Training Centre Kent for the provision of L6 Modules to replace that offered previously by CILEx.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met on three occasions in the period covered by this report under the chairmanship of Nicholas Hatzis. In particular it focussed on: risk , reviewing the risk register, reviewed the Faculty Office accounts and reserves position ; the LBMW value for money review; cyber security; faculty office budgets and the business plan. It is looking to refresh its membership with an advert for a new member and an interview process.

New/Revised Rules

None during the period though since the end of the financial year we have updated the Code of Practice with two new chapters having been added designed to support notarial practice in the digital and remote working environment. Particular thanks to Jonathan Hewitt, Elaine Standish, Iain Ostrowski-Rogers and Robert Kerss for their work on this important project.

New Conduct and Discipline Rules 2026 came into force on 28 April replacing the 2015 framework . There is also a new Fees and cost Order of the same date. We have recruited panels of investigators and prosecutors following the introduction of the new system . This represents a very considerable amount of work and thanks particularly to my Deputy Registrar Ian Blaney for driving this work stream forward with such determination and skill.

The consolidated Accounts rules will also come into force on 1st July 2026 and be uploaded on the Faculty Office website.

Working parties

During the past year the Faculty Office two working parties on “the future of the notarial profession” and “AI and new technology” have continued to meet. These working parties are constituted of members of the faculty office, notaries and other professionals who can bring a variety of insights to these evolving issues.

Financial

This report covers the year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 our accounting year.

The accounts for the regulatory arm of the Faculty Office are attached. The operating reserve currently stands at £425,115.

In line with good practice and the costs transparency requirements of the LSB, budgets for the years ending 31 March 2027, 2028 and 2029 have been prepared and are also attached; these budgets anticipate an anticipated inflation figure of 3.5% for 2027/28/29.

We will this month publish a consultation on the practising certificate fees for the practising certificate year commencing in the autumn.

There remains pressure on the budget including significant extra spend on consultants for AML and Entity Regulation, and the DEI project a governance expert and remaining inflationary pressures.

[The 2025/2026 accounts for the Faculty Office Contingency Fund are also attached and the balance stands at £128,262, a net reduction of £17,008 on the previous year.]

This fund exists to provide cover for costs arising from disciplinary cases which are otherwise not recoverable from the notaries concerned.

Inspections

During the reporting period, our inspectors carried out a total of 38 inspections of notaries' records and practices under the Inspection Regulations. This comprised 28 remote inspections, 9 in-person inspections, and one hybrid entity inspection.

Remote inspections remain the default method for first inspections unless particular circumstances indicate that an in-person inspection is more appropriate. Inspections of conveyancing and probate practices continue to be conducted in person.

Of the inspections completed during the period, 24 practices were assessed as compliant and 13 as generally compliant. One practice was found to be non-compliant, and the Master had cause to give Directions.

A report summarising the inspectors' findings will be published on the Faculty Office's website shortly.

Fraser Sinclair assisted with one AML inspection. In addition, although not included in the inspection figures, we separately conduct approximately 70 annual AML reviews each year.

Following the appointment of additional inspectors, there are now currently five inspectors. There will be a review of the inspection's regime during the period of our business plan led by a consultant David Pope.

In conclusion

Once again, the Faculty Office has had a busy period in 2025/26, not only dealing with the day to day regulation of the notarial profession but also in addressing issues raised both by the two 'oversight' bodies, the LSB and OPBAS, and the various Government departments with whom we engage including the MoJ, the Home Office and HM Treasury and now with the coming reform of OPBAS the FCA.

The office continues to evolve and in early 2026 we were led by our governance consultant Jim Clifford in an Away day with the aim of developing a new robust monitoring and evaluation framework to demonstrate the impact of and benefits derived from our regulatory activities. We also reflected on how we can give better Assurance to the Master that we regulate the profession with the right strategy, governance and regulatory activities. A report on the agreed strategy following this Away Day will be published in the autumn.

The Faculty Office continues to be extremely grateful for both professional Societies' support of its work and for the support which they provide to the profession.

HOWARD DELLAR | REGISTRAR

FACULTY OFFICE

15.07.26