

What to do if you want to be a qualified embalmer

In order to become a member of the British Institute of Embalmers (BIE) you, the applicant must successfully complete an approved training course recognised by the BIE and then apply for membership. Training is provided by BIE accredited tutors who teach an approved syllabus and are accredited by the Institute. The tutors are not employed by the Institute and any fees, except those paid for examinations and membership, are paid directly to the tutor. You will be required to sit an entrance test before the start of your course to ensure your suitability.

Student Membership

Initial membership of the BIE is gained by becoming a student member. To become a student member for 3 years you must be 18 years of age. You will need to enrol with a BIE accredited tutor and they will test your suitability for the course by way of an entrance test. If you pass this test you will;

1. Enter into a tuition agreement and sign a tuition contract with the tutor (tuition fees are between you and the tutor)
2. Complete an application for BIE student membership at the start of your tuition. An original copy of your contract, application form for student membership, proof of identity and your payment for membership will be sent to the BIE for approval. Once approved you will be sent a student welcome pack and membership card and copy of student book from the BIE. Your application will not be processed until payment has been received. The BIE will issue you with a student RSC number which you will use for all your exams.
3. Once your RSC number has been issued, your tutor will be able to register you as a candidate with the International Examinations Board of Embalmers (IEBE). Full payment of theoretical exam fees must be paid by you and received by the IEBE before your application can be processed.

Once you are a student member you will be able to attend Divisional meetings and the national AGM without voting rights and you will also be able to attend the BIE's biennial educational weekend (Keele University).

If you have passed all of the theory exams within the initial 3 year period, you can apply to extend your student membership by 2x 1 year extensions which must run consecutively with your initial 3 year period.

Types of Course

There are many types of course available to people wishing to study the theory and practice of embalming.

Classroom Based

A classroom-based course will generally consist of structured courses over a period of time, to which the student is expected to attend. Generally, the study time will comprise of both theory and practical tuition and a higher level of supervision than may be found on a correspondence course. Classroom based courses usually last for around 2.5 – 3 years attending on a part-time basis.

Correspondence

A correspondence course allows a student to work at their own pace, usually involving literature being sent to the student to complete in their own time. Contact with the tutor will be less than with a classroom-based course but there will be less travelling involved. The duration of the course very much depends on the individual student and their work ethic.

Practical Tuition

Both classroom and correspondence courses will contain practical tuition that will take place in an embalming theatre. It is advised that you discuss the following with your choice of tutor/school before you commence the course.

- Availability of venue
- Availability of cases
- Extra transport costs
- Facilitation costs
- Provision of personal protective equipment.

Fees

Tuition fees are not controlled by the BIE, they are set by the individual tutors. It is worth remembering that every training provider will include the teaching of both the theoretical and practical parts of the course but there may be additional fees payable.

It is for the student to ensure that they are clear as to what the training provider will include within the cost of the course before they enter into or sign any contract.

Examinations

The IEBE is the examination provider for the BIE and the course comprises of 5 theory modules numbered 1-5. At the end of each module there is a written examination, which lasts for 2.5 hours.

Once all the theoretical modules have been completed successfully there are two practical examinations. The practical examinations involve embalming two deceased, one who has been subject to an autopsy and one which has not. Your embalming skills must be assessed by your accredited tutor in person and they must sign a document to say that you meet the required level of ability before your tutor applies for practical examinations to take place.

Full Membership

Once all exams have been completed successfully you will receive a form which will enable you to apply for full membership of the BIE. Membership is awarded by members of the National Council. This decision is made by the members of The National Council of the Institute and full membership is not automatic upon successful completion of the exams. Once you are given full membership status you will be issued with a membership number and can use the letters “MBIE” after your Surname.

Accredited Tutors

All accredited tutors are regulated by the B.I.E and must abide by a strict code of practice set out by the BIE. One of the clauses in the code of practice is that a tuition contract exists between your chosen accredited tutor and yourself. An original signed copy of the contract will be held at the BIE national office for the duration of the learning agreement. The minimum requirements for the contract are available on the BIE’s website and it is recommended that you check your contract against these minimum requirements to ensure that it complies.

Arbitration

If a student is dissatisfied with their tuition, they can contact the Student Liaison Officer whose details can be obtained from the BIE’s International office. The Student Liaison Officer is an experienced member of the Institute who will liaise with the student and the school to trying to reach an amicable solution to most problems.

If you wish to make a formal complaint against a tutor, your complaint must to be sent in writing to the BIE’s National General Secretary, c/o 21c Station Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 0HL. This position is currently held by Karen Caney FBIE.

Previous Qualifications

If you already have a qualification in the theory and practice of embalming it may be possible for you to apply for membership of the BIE without taking part in a BIE course. You will need to contact BIE National Office with details of your qualification and your request will be passed to the Examinations Authority who will assess each case individually.