

Student enrolment and completion of the academic stage of training

What you need to know

Information Directorate
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Important dates – for applicants applying through the Central Applications Board only *

March 2008	We will send an application form to those applying through the Central Applications Board (CAB).
1 April 2008	Deadline for receipt of completed application forms and fees from those students with character and suitability issues
1 August 2008	Deadline for receipt of completed application forms and fees for students without character and suitability issues
31 August 2008	Students who have not received confirmation of completion of the academic stage of training by this date should contact us (www.sra.org.uk/contact-us).
31 October 2008	Deadline for receipt of results for confirmation of the academic stage of training

* **Important** – if you have not applied through the Central Applications Board, you can submit an application form up until the start of your LPC course, on the condition that you give the LPC provider a written undertaking on enrolment that you will lodge your application with the SRA within 7 calendar days of enrolment on the LPC.

If we do not receive your application within 7 days of enrolment, we will not process your application for the 2008 intake, we will return your application form and fee directly to you and you will be required to leave the course.

Introduction

The Solicitors Act 1974, the Training Regulation 1990, the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Regulations 1990 and the Admission Regulations 1994 oblige the SRA to ensure that an individual is of the requisite character and suitability before they are granted admission as a solicitor.

This requirement applies throughout the qualification process, although the construction of the regulations means that character and suitability are likely to be considered at specific points in the process, such as application for student enrolment.

Regulation 5 of the Training Regulations 1990 places an obligation on all applicants intending to commence a Legal Practice Course (LPC) to obtain a certificate of enrolment with the SRA and Regulation 7 of the same regulations places an obligation on all applicants to obtain a certificate of completion of the academic stage before attending the LPC.

Under the Training Regulations, we can refuse or revoke student enrolment.

Why you need to enrol as a student

Before you start your LPC, you must

- enrol as a student
- obtain written confirmation from us that you have completed the academic stage of training, i.e. that you have successfully completed a Qualifying Law Degree (QLD), or a Common Professional Examination (CPE) or a Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) or have an exemption from the CPE

Until you have done both, you will not be able to start the LPC or enter into a training contract.

(For information about these courses, see www.sra.org.uk/students/academic-stage.page and www.sra.org.uk/students/conversion-courses.page.)

How to apply

- If you have applied for a full-time LPC through the Central Applications Board (CAB), the board will give us your details and at the beginning of March we will post you an application for student enrolment and completion of the academic stage.
- If you do not receive a form, or you are applying to take the LPC part-time, download the form from www.sra.org.uk/enrol#form.

When to apply – for applicants applying through the Central Applications Board only

If you have no character and suitability issues, you must send your application and fee early enough to ensure that we receive it **before 1 August** in the year you intend to start the LPC.

If you have any [character and suitability issues \(see below\)](#) that we need to consider, you must send your application and fee so we receive it **before 1 April** of the year you intend to start the LPC. These applications take longer to process and may involve an interview with an SRA adjudicator.

Your application is not complete without the £80 fee.

We aim to process 95 per cent of applications within 30 days of receiving them.

If we receive your application after the deadline, we will return your form and fee and we will not deal with your application except in exceptional circumstances, such as

- close family bereavement
- prolonged period of hospitalisation or illness which make it impossible to meet the deadline
- trauma, such as being the victim of a serious crime.

Inability to meet the deadline because of a holiday or a late decision to attend an LPC course are unlikely to meet our definition of exceptional circumstances.

Each case is judged on its individual merits, following submission of the late application with all relevant supporting evidence.

Once granted, student enrolment remains valid for five years. For example, if your enrolment is granted on the 1 August 2008, it remains valid until 31 December 2012, when you will be given the option to renew it for a further five years for an additional fee.

If you are not enrolled as a student then you will not be able to start your LPC.

Your character and suitability to be a solicitor – what you need to tell us

When you enrol as a student, you must declare any information that might affect your suitability to be a solicitor. This includes:

- any criminal conviction, including cautions, reprimands and warnings (even if they are spent)
- any instance of cheating in examinations or plagiarism during a course of study
- any County Court Judgments against you, declarations of bankruptcy (even if they have been satisfied) or evidence of inability to manage financial affairs
- any other incident in which your character has been called into question.

Details of the supporting documents you must supply can be found in the guidance notes on section B of the EN1 application form at www.sra.org.uk/enrol#form.

You must send us all of the required information and supporting documents by the closing date 1 April of the year that you intend to start the LPC, or we will return your form and fee.

You must declare any character or suitability issues at the earliest opportunity. Failure to do so may have serious implications if you wish to practise as a solicitor.

Why you have to make these declarations

Under the Solicitors Act 1974, the SRA has been delegated responsibility for setting, maintaining and enforcing standards for all solicitors admitted in England and Wales.

We therefore have a duty to consider the character and suitability of anyone who wishes to enter the profession.

When you apply for admission to the roll of solicitors you must complete a Criminal Records Bureau standard disclosure (see www.crb.gov.uk for more information).

What happens if you have convictions or other issues?

Every case is considered on its own merits. You will be asked to supply written confirmation of the relevant issues and you may be asked to appear before an SRA adjudicator to explain your situation.

If matters arise after your student enrolment which may affect your character and suitability to remain a student, you must tell us immediately. If you do not, there may be a delay to your application for admission as a solicitor or, after admission, in your application for a practising certificate.

Your referees

You must provide details of referees who can confirm that you are suitable to be a solicitor. Your referees should be

- people who know you well enough to vouch for your character
- professional people (preferably)
- people who know of any problems you have had such as convictions, instances of plagiarism or any other factors which might relate to your suitability to become a solicitor, e.g. if you have had any instances of plagiarism, you must provide an academic reference from your course provider .

We do not accept references from relatives.

What happens next?

We will tell you in writing whether you have granted you student enrolment. If you have not heard from us thirty days after we received your application, contact us via www.sra.org.uk/contact-us.

Completion of the academic stage of training

Before you can start your LPC or enter into a training contract, we must verify that you have the academic qualifications necessary to do so. You must have passed the foundations of legal knowledge within a QLD or CPE/GDL within the required time frame.

There is a strict limit on the validity of these qualifications for the purposes of qualifying as a solicitor. They are valid for seven years from 1 October in the year of the award. After this time, the qualification is considered "stale" and you must retake all of the foundation subjects by completing the entire CPE/GDL.

In exceptional cases, we may re-validate a "stale" academic qualification if there is reliable, independent evidence that you have undertaken ongoing legal updating. This may include evidence of the applicant having maintained a sound working knowledge of the foundations of legal knowledge by actively engaging in legal work in professional practice or as a legal educator, throughout the period following the completion of the academic stage of training.

Re-validation of qualifications is at our discretion, and is most likely to be exercised for qualifications that are no more than 10 years old.

You must make a formal application for completion of the academic stage of training by completing section D of the EN1 application form at www.sra.org.uk/enrol#form. Please fully complete this section to help us verify your qualifications with results that may have been sent by your university. Failure to do so may result in the application taking longer to process.

When we have received your qualifications, we will confirm in writing that you have completed the academic stage of training. You will not be allowed to undertake the LPC if you have not received this confirmation from the SRA.

The certificate of completion of the academic stage of training will remain valid for seven years from 1 October of the year in which the applicant obtained the QLD, CPE/GDL or satisfactorily completed an Integrated Course, or for two years from the date of the certificate, whichever is the later.

Automatic notification of your academic achievements

Some academic stage results are sent to us directly by universities, colleges and other course providers. This may apply to you if you have completed a QLD or CPE/GDL within the last four years or you expect to graduate or complete the course by 31 August.

To ensure that this happens, you must make your university or course provider aware that you wish your name and result to be added to the information that is sent directly to the SRA.

Other notification of your academic achievements

If your academic stage results have not been sent directly to us, you must provide us with other evidence of your attainment. If you have completed a QLD or the CPE/GDL, you must supply photocopies of your degree certificate and transcripts for each year of your degree studies that have been signed by a professional person (solicitor/doctor/teacher) as being true copies of the original documents.

You must also provide a full academic transcript of your QLD or CPE/GDL if you have any condoned passes in the foundations of legal knowledge, or if you have obtained your qualification via credit transfer or completed part of your course at an overseas institution.

Only send original documents when absolutely necessary. Send them by recorded delivery to the SRA with a stamped addressed envelope for their return.

If you are a Member or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) or you have a non-qualifying degree, you will need to complete a CPE Exemption application in order to be granted completion of the academic stage of training.

You can download the application form and notes from www.sra.org.uk/documents/students/conversion-courses/exemptapplic.pdf or contact us via <http://www.sra.org.uk/contact-us>.

All results must be received by the SRA by 31 October in order for completion of the academic stage of training to be confirmed.

What happens next?

We will confirm in writing that you have been granted completion of the academic stage of training. If you do not have this by 31 August, contact us via www.sra.org.uk/contact-us.

Refunds for student enrolment

We will refund your fee (after deducting £10 for administration costs) in the following circumstances only:

- you have decided to apply to the Bar Council instead
- your application has been received but not processed
- your student enrolment has been granted for less than six months and you have decided not to commence the LPC
- student enrolment has been granted for less than six months and the student has died.

Reminder

You **must not** undertake a LPC or enter into a training contract until you have obtained written confirmation from the SRA that:

- you are enrolled as a student, **and**
- you have completed the academic stage of training.

If you start a course without having both of these documents, you may not be allowed to complete it, and you may not be entitled to any refunds of course fees paid.