



Professional Skills Course

Course structure, provider authorisation and course accreditation

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1. Course structure

(a) Subject areas

The Professional Skills Course (PSC) builds upon the Legal Practice Course (LPC). The PSC provides training in three subject areas.

- Financial and Business Skill
- Advocacy and Communication Skills
- Client Care and Professional Standards

(b) Compulsory core

Each subject area forms part of a compulsory core, which entails face-to-face instruction for a minimum number of hours.

- Financial and Business Skill 18 hours
- Advocacy and Communication Skills 18 hours
- Client Care and Professional Standards 12 hours

The assessment scheme for each part of the compulsory core is as follows.

- Financial and Business Skills
 - Written Standards Element 1 no assessment
 - Written Standards elements 2-6 Examination (one-and-half hours)
- Advocacy and Communication Skills skills appraisal
- Client Care and professional Standards no assessment

NB The Client Care and professional Standards module must not be completed until a trainee has served at least six months full time or fulltime equivalent in a training contract.

(c) Electives

The elective element of the PSC entails a minimum total of 24 hours of instruction.

The following conditions and provisions apply.

- A maximum total of 12 hours of instruction in elective topics (whether whole courses or part courses) may be delivered on a distance-learning basis, provided that such instruction is “suitably supervised or assessed.”
- Elective topics must fall within at least one of the three subject areas of the course

- Instruction in elective topics normally will not occur before completion of the corresponding compulsory core.
- At minimum 12 hours of instruction in elective topics must be delivered on a face-to-face basis.
- All elective topics must have as their primary objective the development of a trainee's professional skills
- There are no prescribed written standards.
- There is scope for tailoring the PSC to meet the particular training needs of individual trainees and their employers.

(d) Information technology, business/commercial awareness

Trainees should grasp the importance of information technology and business/commercial awareness. They should understand the applications of information technology and business/commercial awareness across a range of professional activities.

Information technology and business/commercial awareness should be regarded by PSC instructors as pervasive concerns – to be addressed throughout the compulsory core and elective topics.

2. Provider authorisation and course accreditation

(a) General

PSC provision arrangements rely heavily on self-accreditation of courses by authorised course providers.

Potential course providers are advised to read on – for guidance on several key matters in the process of securing SRA authorisation as a PSC provider.

Potential providers must demonstrate that all planned courses – those for which they seek accreditation from the SRA, and those that they subsequently accredit themselves – meet stated criteria.

(b) Course Director

PSC providers must appoint a course director and supply the appointee's details to the SRA.

(c) Authorisation procedure

i. Application

Potential PSC providers can apply for one of three types of authorisation

- Authorisation to provide compulsory core instruction in one or more of the three subject areas (all authorised compulsory core providers are authorised by default to provide elective topics in the same subject area)
- Authorisation to provide compulsory core instruction in one or more of the three subject areas, along with authorisation to provide electives in one or more of the subject areas in which authorisation to provide compulsory-core instruction is not sought (eg authorisation to provide compulsory-core instruction in Advocacy and Communication Skills, along with authorisation to provide electives only – ie not compulsory-core instruction – in Client Care and Professional Standards)
- Authorisation to provide one or more electives only – i.e not compulsory-core instruction – in one or more of the three subject areas

ii. Application forms

Applications should be submitted to the SRA.

iii. Supporting documentation

The application must provide sufficient detail and information

It also must

- Include supporting documentation as stipulated
- Be accompanied by the appropriate authorisation fee
- Be submitted at least eight weeks in advance of the scheduled start date for the course

iv. Self-accreditation

An authorised PSC provider may itself accredit electives that it intends to offer. It may do so when the elective in question is

- In any subject area in which it already is authorised to provide compulsory core instruction

- In any subject area in which it already is authorised to provide elective instruction

(d) Authorisation fees

From 1 April 2005; the authorisation fees are:

i. Initial application

- £125.00 base fee, *plus*
- £450.00 for each compulsory-core subject are applied for, *plus*
- £450.00 for each elective subject area applied for

Examples

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in one subject area is £675.63 (£125.00 + £450.00 + £100.63 VAT)

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in two subject areas is £1204.38 (£125.00 + £900.00 + £179.38 VAT)

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in three subject areas is £1,733.13 (£125.00 + £1350.00 + £258.13 VAT)

ii. Subsequent application

- £450.00 for each compulsory-core subject are applied for, plus
- £450.00 for each elective subject area applied for
- No fee is payable for applications to provide elective instruction in a subject area with respect to which application is also being made to provide compulsory-core instruction.

Examples

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in one subject area is £528.75 (£450.00 + £78.75 VAT)

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in two subject area is £1057.50 (£900.00 + £157.50 VAT)

The total cost of applying for authorisation to provide instruction in three subject areas is £1,586.25 (£1350.00 + £236.25 VAT)

Please ensure that VAT is included with fee payment as shown above.

(e) Application process

An application form should be requested from:

The Validation and Monitoring Team
The Solicitors Regulation Authority
Ipsley Court
Redditch
B98 0TD
DX19114 Redditch

On receipt of an application, it is reviewed by the SRA's Validation and Monitoring Team – to ensure that it contains all requisite information and documentation. If it does not, the applicant organisation is requested to submit additional information or amended application.

The course materials and programme are reviewed by a PSC assessor, who subsequently submits a report on them to the SRA. If the report requires it, the applicant organisation is requested to comment on and/or address issues and concerns – before authorisation is granted.

(f) Authorisation period

In the case of re-authorisation, authorisation is for a period of five years.

In the case of a new provider, authorisation is for a period of three years.