

Training trainee solicitors

Guidelines on recruitment and selection

Education and Training Unit

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Having good and consistent recruitment and selection procedures will help you to choose the right candidate for your organisation and ensure that you comply with employment legislation and [rule 6 of the Solicitors' Code of Conduct](#).

If you recruit trainees two years in advance, and you have signed up to the **Voluntary code to good practice in the recruitment of trainee solicitors**, you need to ensure that you comply with the deadline dates and other requirements of that code.

This guidance contains tips on setting up a recruitment and selection system or reviewing existing ones.

Your organisation along with many training establishments may be inundated every year with applications from prospective trainees. Sifting through the applications to find the best candidates is time-consuming. If you spend time planning the recruitment process, it should run smoothly and effectively. When it is in place, it can be used for future recruitment, ensuring consistency, no matter how often you recruit or how many trainees you take.

Selection criteria

The first step is to develop selection criteria detailing the work the trainee will be doing and the skills the successful person will need to have. Make sure that the selection criteria do not discriminate, directly or indirectly.

From this, you can compile a job description to include the roles and responsibilities of the job, and a person specification of the qualifications and skills essential to do the job. The skills might include IT skills, interpersonal skills, languages and communications skills.

The job description and person specification can be given to applicants and used in your recruitment literature or advertising.

For alternative formats, email info.services@sra.org.uk or telephone 0870 606 2555.

Form of applications

You should decide whether to use an application form or to ask applicants to submit a CV. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. However, it is generally considered that application forms are more beneficial, because all the applicants are asked to provide the same information, in the same format, and it is easier to measure the candidates against the selection criteria.

Equal opportunities monitoring forms can also be attached to the application forms, and you can use these for monitoring the operation of your equal opportunities policy.

Selection process

At the beginning of the selection process, decide

- who will be on the selection panel
- whether the candidates will be expected to complete an assessment and what form it will take, for example a letter-writing test
- whether there will be one or two interviews
- the time scale, including the deadline date for receipt of applications, the date for short listing and the interview date
- where the interviews will be held
- the questions the candidates will be asked (these should relate to the selection criteria, develop the information given on the application form, and give the candidates the opportunity to demonstrate how they meet the criteria. All the candidates should be asked the same questions)

Short listing

The selection panel should short list the applicants as soon as possible after the deadline date for receipt of applications.

It will be easier to short list if you develop a short-listing form, because it will enable you to

focus on the selection criteria

- compare the candidates against the selection criteria
- give feedback to unsuccessful candidates
- have a record of the selection process if a claim was pursued against you

The interviews

When you invite candidates for interview, you should give an indication of whether they will be expected to take a test, how long the interview should take and whether there will be one or two interviews.

The selection panel should meet before the interviews to agree

- who will lead the interview panel
- how the interviews will be structured
- who will ask which questions and in what order

At the start of the interview, the candidates should be

- put at ease
- introduced to the panel and their roles in the organisation
- informed of
 - how long the interview should take
 - how the interview will be structured
 - who will be taking notes
 - what opportunity they will have to ask questions
 - when and how they will be told of the decision

The notes should show how the candidates have demonstrated they meet the selection criteria. The decision on which candidate to appoint should be based on an assessment of each candidate against the criteria.

You should keep the interview notes to show the basis on which the successful candidate(s) was appointed.

Offer letter

When you have decided on the successful candidate, you should send an offer letter as soon as possible. Details of the information to include in the offer letter can be found in **Training trainee solicitors: The Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements**; download a **sample offer letter**, which you can amend or adapt to suit your needs.