

Guidance

Vocational training for trainee solicitors

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Status

This guidance is to help you understand how you complete your vocational training to be a solicitor.

Who is this guidance for?

Anyone completing the vocational part of training to be a solicitor.

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance is to answer some of the common questions you may have about the steps you need to take to complete the vocational part of training to become a solicitor.

It is a living document and we will update it from time to time.

General

To be admitted as a solicitor you must have completed:

- the academic stage, and
- the vocational stage.

We have a statutory duty to make sure those we admit as solicitors have the knowledge and skills necessary for practice. We do this by specifying the education and training you must complete to become a solicitor. These requirements are set out in the [Authorisation of Individuals Regulations and the Education, Training](#) and [Assessment Provider Regulations](#).

To complete the vocational stage of training you must complete (regulation 3D 2 of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations):

1. The legal practice course (LPC)
2. A period of recognised training
3. The professional skills course (PSC)

Legal Practice Course

The Legal Practice Course is a one year, full time, postgraduate course and is the first step of the vocational stage for becoming a solicitor in England and Wales. The course provides a bridge between academic study and vocational training.

Courses are provided by various providers and not by the SRA.

Period of recognised training

What is a period of recognised training?

It is structured, work based learning forming one of the elements of the vocational stage of your training to be a solicitor.

It is closely supervised practical legal work, usually over two years on a full-time basis or you can do it on a part time equivalent.

Requirements of recognised training

You must maintain a record of your training (regulation 3E.1 of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations). This is important because you will not otherwise satisfactorily complete your period of recognised training.

Your record must:

- contain details of the work you have performed;
- record how you have applied and developed the skills, as set out in the Practice Skills Standards;
- record your reflections on, and your training principal's appraisal of, your performance and development against, and your attainment of the skills set out in the Practice Skills Standards and
- include verification by the person supervising you.

Your training provider has similar obligations (regulation 4.1 of the Education, Training and Assessment Provider Regulations).

If we are not satisfied you have received, or are receiving training meeting these requirements we may (regulation 3E.2 of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations):

- refuse to recognise all or any part of your training; or
- require you to take certain steps or undertake further training, subject to such conditions as we consider appropriate.

You can find more information on our [website](#).

When can you start a period of recognised training?

Usually you start your period of recognised training after you complete the Legal Practice Course (LPC). But, it is possible to do your training while you study for a Qualifying Law Degree, Common Professional Examination or LPC.

You can find more information in our [Authorised training provider information pack](#).

Can you complete a period of recognised training on a part time basis?

You can complete your training on a part time basis if the time you spend training is equivalent to two years.

A full-time training period, in which you work five days per week, is for two years (730 calendar days, or 522 working days).

So, as a guide, if you work:

- two and a half days per week, the period is four years (1,460 calendar days)

- three days per week, the period is three years and four months (1,216 calendar days)
- four days per week, the period is two years and six months (913 calendar days)

How much holiday and sickness leave are you allowed during the period of recognised training?

This is something you agree with your training provider. It should be included in the terms and conditions of your employment.

Can your period of recognised training be terminated?

A period of recognised training is an apprenticeship. It can only be ended if the criteria for ending an apprenticeship are met.

Equivalent means

What is equivalent means?

If you have worked in a legal environment and gained equivalent experience in the three years before you start your training and:

- your experience allowed you to apply and develop one or more of the skills set out in the practice skills standards (link to glossary term); and
- you were supervised and had regular appraisals of your performance and development during that time.

Your training provider may recognise your experience as satisfying up to six months of the training period (regulation 4.2 of the Education, Training and Assessment Provider Regulations).

We can then decide we are satisfied you have completed all or any part of or the vocational stage of training by equivalent means (regulation 3A.2 of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations). We can do the same in relation to the academic stage of training and in some cases both exemptions may apply. Examples are given below.

In order for us to decide this, you need to apply to us for exemptions from the vocational stage on and you do so by completing the relevant part of our Equivalent Means form.

You can find more information in our [Equivalent Means guidance](#).

Examples of exemptions

You are a Chartered Legal Executive. Are you exempt from a period of recognised training?

You may be exempt from a period of training if you have:

- satisfied the requirements of the academic stage through study or exemptions granted
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- been engaged as a Chartered Legal Executive in the practice of law.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). You must complete the mandatory elements of the PSC before you apply for admission to the roll.

When you apply to be admitted as a solicitor you will need to provide us with evidence of your qualification as a Chartered Legal Executive.

You are an Assistant Justices' Clerk. Are you exempt from a period of recognised training?

You may be exempt from a period of training if you have:

- completed the academic stage
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- before attending the LPC, you have served for at least five years out of the last 10 years in the Magistrates' Courts Service as an Assistant Justices' Clerk.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). You must complete the mandatory elements of the PSC before you apply for admission to the roll.

Character and suitability

What is a character and suitability issue?

Everyone who is admitted to the Roll of solicitors in England and Wales must show they have the satisfactory character and are suitable to be a solicitor. This is because we have a duty to make sure that solicitors providing legal services will protect the interests of consumers and the public has confidence in the profession.

Therefore to be eligible for admission to become a solicitor we must be satisfied as to your character and suitability (regulation 3A.1(b) of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations).

The factors we take into account when we consider your character and suitability are found in our [Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules](#).

When do you need to tell us about a character and suitability issue

It is important you tell us about any issues which may affect your character and suitability when you apply for admission to the Roll.

You can ask for an early assessment if you want to check anything at any time before you apply for admission, however we are not bound, in any subsequent application for admission by an early assessment.

What will happen if your application is refused?

You can only ask for another assessment of your character and suitability where there has been a material change to your circumstances relevant to our assessment.

Do you have to tell your training principal of any character and suitability issues?

You should tell your training principal of any character and suitability issues because it may affect whether you can carry on with your training.

Professional Skills Course (PSC)

What is the PSC?

It is a short course which builds on the knowledge and skills you gain during the legal practice course (LPC). It is made up of three compulsory subject areas and electives (choices).

You can find more information in our [Professional Skills Course information pack](#)

Do you need to complete the PSC before you finish your period of recognised training?

Normally you will complete your PSC during your period of recognised training. If that does not happen you will not need to extend your training period but we will not be able to admit you until you have done it.

Who pays for the PSC?

Your training provider pays for the fees and expenses of your first attempt at the PSC.

Can you have any exemptions from the PSC?

An application for equivalent means may apply to the PSC and you may be granted exemptions from one or more of the core elements of the PSC if you have the relevant experience and/or training which covers the same ground as the PSC written standards.

The PSC is designed to build on the LPC so completion of the LPC can be used as a basis to apply for exemptions from the core elements of the PSC.

If you want to get exemptions you will need to submit an [Equivalent Means - Professional Skills Course \(not CILEX\) \(DOC\)](#) application.

Those who do not need to complete a period of recognised training, such as Chartered Legal Executives and Justices' Clerks' Assistants are automatically exempt from the electives (choices).

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