

# Legal Practice Course Information Pack

September 2021

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## Status of this document

This information pack sets out the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) requirements for Legal Practice Courses (LPCs) that must be followed by all providers.

The requirements and their application conform to the principles of good regulation, to which the SRA is committed, namely they are proportionate, targeted, transparent, consistent and the SRA will be accountable for their operation.

This approach is intended to allow and encourage LPC providers to be innovative in the design and delivery of courses and to understand and respond to the needs of key stakeholders, students and their future clients and employers, while safeguarding the standard of the solicitors' qualification.

## Overview of Legal Practice Courses and the regulatory framework

### Background

Qualification as a solicitor is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). Satisfactory completion of a Legal Practice Course (LPC or the course) is a requirement to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales under the provisions of [Authorisation of Individuals Regulations](https://news.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) [https://news.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/]. The LPC builds on students' academic knowledge of the law and prepares them for their training and early years in practice.

Organisations seeking authorisation to provide an LPC must apply to the SRA and demonstrate both that they are committed to, and can support, the delivery and assessment of an LPC and that the specific course(s) they intend to offer will meet the essential requirements set down by the SRA. The criteria for authorisation and validation are set out in [annex 3](#) [#annex3] of this information pack.

It is anticipated that organisations seeking authorisation to provide LPCs will include universities and other organisations with or without degree-awarding powers. The SRA does not wish to restrict the range of organisations that are authorised to provide LPCs. Decisions will be made using the authorisation and validation criteria, regardless of the type of organisation applying. Some organisations may be interested in delivering the course in partnership with others. Such arrangements are dealt with in section 7 on Collaborative arrangements.

Throughout this information pack, organisations authorised to provide the LPC and those seeking such authorisation are referred to as providers.

## **Overview of the regulatory framework**

The SRA has a statutory duty to ensure that those who are admitted as solicitors have the knowledge and skills necessary for practice. It must be assured that students who pass an LPC have achieved the learning outcomes for the course and therefore have the necessary knowledge and skills for the early stage of their career in practice. The SRA also has duties to promote equal opportunity and to eliminate discrimination. It needs to be assured that course providers share and are working towards these aims. The approval and quality assurance requirements have been determined by the need for these assurances.

The SRA recognises that students have different preferences and priorities about the way in which they study; also that providers can respond to and lead innovations in teaching and learning. The SRA aims to achieve a balance between ensuring, on the one hand, that all diligent students following a validated course have an opportunity to achieve and demonstrate the learning outcomes and, on the other, that innovation resulting in good quality courses and opportunities for a diverse cohort of students is not stifled.

Both existing providers of current LPCs and those seeking to become authorised as providers for the first time will be considered against the same criteria.

The SRA seeks to ensure that students can make informed choices about how and where to study. Therefore, providers are required to publish a minimum set of information about their courses.

## **Overview of LPCs**

Unless they are studying on an [Exempting Law Degree or an Integrated Course \[#exempting\]](#) students must satisfactorily complete the academic stage of training before they can start an LPC. This ensures they have the underpinning legal knowledge on which the LPC is built.

LPCs can be delivered and studied in two stages:

- Stage 1 – which covers the three essential practice areas of Business Law and Practice, Property Law and Practice and Litigation, together with the Course Skills, Professional Conduct and Regulation, Taxation and Wills and Administration of Estates
- Stage 2 – which is made up of three Vocational Electives.

Stages 1 and 2 need to be separated conceptually to ensure the appropriate application of the outcomes and the assessment requirements and that the correct information is recorded on students' transcripts. However, some courses, including part-time courses, may be designed in a way that would justify combining the delivery of Stages 1 and 2. Providers wishing to offer a combined course will need to explain in their validation applications how the requirements for both stages will be met and their rationale for combining the two stages into one course. The coherence of all courses will be considered during the validation process. Some providers may decide to offer only Stage 1 or only Stage 2 Vocational Electives. It is anticipated that many providers will offer Stages 1 and 2 as separate rather than combined courses, to facilitate student choice.

The learning outcomes for the LPC set out what a successful student should, under appropriate supervision, be able to do on conclusion of the course. The learning outcomes specify the irreducible minimum that must be covered by all courses and all students. When designing their courses providers will be able to focus more attention and allocate additional time to specific aspects of the course, responding to the needs of different student groups and practice areas.

## **Overview of arrangements to assure quality and standards**

The SRA requires providers to demonstrate in their initial applications for authorisation and validation that they understand the principles of quality assurance and that they are committed to assuring the quality and standards of their courses. This commitment will be monitored by the SRA throughout the authorisation and validation period. The SRA will seek assurances about the quality and standard of courses.

On-going monitoring of the provision will be undertaken by the SRA, mainly using factual and evaluative annual reports submitted by the providers. The SRA reserves the right to visit and review provision, if there is evidence that the quality or standard of a course is at risk.

Although the SRA will not visit providers in order to grade the quality of their provision or to inform the publication of reports on individual providers, it will arrange visits to providers from time to time to ensure that it has an understanding of, and an insight into, the range of courses

on offer. Re-authorisation decisions will be informed, in part, by these visits.

## **Becoming authorised**

Applications for authorisation as a provider and for the validation of specific courses will be considered by a panel appointed by the SRA. Applications will be considered against published criteria.

Applications will need to be submitted no less than six months before it is intended the first course(s) should start. Also, to allow the SRA to plan to deal with applications, a provider must give the SRA at least three months notice of its intention to make an application, i.e. it should notify the SRA at least nine months before the intended start date for the course of its intention to apply. However, to allow sufficient time to market and recruit to new courses, providers are encouraged to work to a more generous timetable.

Any marketing information about courses should make it clear if their availability is subject to the authorisation of the provider and/or the validation of the course by the SRA. In the event that the application is not successful the SRA will not take any responsibility for loss of income or inconvenience experienced by the provider or any potential students.

## **The LPC course outcomes and course design requirements**

### **LPC Outcomes**

The [LPC Outcomes \[https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes\]](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes) are key to the design, delivery and assessment of courses and set out the overall aims of the course, that is, to prepare students for work-based learning and provide a general foundation for practice.

The course aims are followed by seven foundational outcomes which make explicit for students, firms and providers the overall objectives for, and learning outcomes of the course.

The LPC outcomes detailed on page 4 of the documents apply to entire course. Specific outcomes and elements are to be understood and applied to course design, content and delivery in this context. For example, identify client's objectives applies to the Core Practice Areas (Business Law and Practice, Property Law and Practice and Litigation) and other substantive law areas of the course and to all Course Skills. However, while a student is expected to be able to reflect on their learning and identify their learning needs as a consequence of undertaking the course and should undertake reflective evaluation of

their performance during the course, it is not expected that this outcome will be explicitly assessed.

Pervasive outcomes are also given for the Core Practice Areas and the Course Skills. The Core Practice Areas outcomes apply to Business Law and Practice, Property Law and Practice and Litigation; the Course Skills outcomes apply to the course skills of Research, Writing, Drafting, Interviewing and Advising, and Advocacy.

## **Course Design - Stage 1**

### **Professional Conduct & Regulation**

Professional conduct and ethics are intended to be pervasive, impacting on all aspects of the design, delivery and content of the course.

All outcomes for the Core Practice areas (BLP, PLP and Litigation), Course Skills and other aspects of the course should be read against and in the context of the outcomes for Professional Conduct. In particular, the outcomes for Professional Conduct including acting only when competent to do so, the principles and practices of good client relations and client care and avoiding discrimination and promoting equality and diversity should be embedded in all relevant substantive and skills aspects of the LPC.

### **Wills and Administration of Estates**

Wills and Administration of Estates the outcomes for this area are at higher level of generality than for the three core practice areas; in other words students should have an overview of wills, grants of representation and administration and should be familiar with the relevant documents. Providers must decide how and when within Stage 1 to assess the outcomes. If it is decided to set a discrete assessment a separate mark will be recorded on students' transcripts. If Wills and the Administration of Estates are assessed in the context of a skills assessment this will need to be recorded on the transcript. Providers will need to demonstrate in their assessment strategies that students will not be able to pass Stage 1 unless they have performed to the required standard in the assessment.

### **Taxation**

The outcomes for Taxation have been deliberately moved toward the front of the outcomes document so it is clear that students should be able to understand the impact of taxation on the core practice areas. Providers will need to decide how and when within Stage 1 to assess the Taxation outcomes, to set this out in their assessment strategies and to record the assessment on students transcripts.

## Core Practice Areas

The Core Practice Areas are Business Law and Practice (BLP), Property Law and Practice (PLP) and Litigation. These are three key areas of law and practice in which each intending solicitor should develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

The descriptions of BLP, PLP and Litigation start with a statement of the overall outcomes for that practice area followed by the elements for each area. Each of the elements must be covered. The aim is that all successful students will have developed a solid and rounded foundation knowledge and understanding of the law in practice in relation to each of the elements by the time they have completed the compulsory course.

Providers have the flexibility to design and shape their course to cater for particular students or specific kinds of legal practice or markets. For example, Property Law and Practice may be set in the context of domestic or commercial property work (or both) and Business Law and Practice might emphasise small domestic business activities or international commercial enterprises.

The elements are not exhaustive. Additional topics or areas can be added, and indeed it is expected that most course providers will do so. For example, in Business Law and Practice, a provider might wish to include specific commercial agreements. In Property Law and Practice, the provider might wish to include such topics as an outline of the planning regime.

Civil Litigation and Criminal Law and Practice have been combined into a single set of outcomes and every LPC will need to give students a foundational knowledge of law and practice in both areas. So long as the course design and delivery enables students to achieve the specified litigation outcomes, the provider has the flexibility to emphasise either the civil or the criminal law aspects or to allocate equal time and importance.

Providers will be able to build on the foundation of the litigation outcomes to include additional elements which focus on particular areas of litigation practice, for example ADR or mediation. Further, there is flexibility for providers to design and deliver their Litigation courses in a context which is appropriate to the ethos of their courses and in response to employer and student-led demand. For example, a provider may wish to develop an LPC course which emphasises high street civil and criminal litigation, whereas a City LPC might focus on commercial litigation and economic crime.

## Course Skills

The outcomes for the Course Skills address only some of the skills necessary for practice as a solicitor as set out in the Day One Outcomes.

The description and outcomes for the Course Skills areas are more detailed in order to ensure that students are properly equipped particularly in relation to legal research, writing and drafting. Also, from the student's point of view, the compulsory course may be the first formal training in skills and a first exposure to vocational training. For these reasons, it is important that the LPC outcomes identify the key attributes of each of the Course Skills.

Course Skills can be taught separately or within the context of a core practice area, Wills and Administration of Estates, Taxation or within a number of different contexts. Having introduced the students to the fundamentals of the separate skills, providers may also wish to combine the skills for teaching and student development purposes and to integrate skills exercises with the substantive law and practice areas so as to simulate practice.

### **Writing and Drafting**

Writing and Drafting are treated as separate Course Skills in the LPC outcomes.

### **Interviewing and Advising**

Although recognised as different skills, Interviewing and Advising are kept together in the LPC outcomes. There are two elements: 1) Interviewing; and 2) Advice and follow-up. The provider will need to ensure that both elements are met fully and reflect the Course Skills outcomes. These elements can (but need not) be combined in the course design and delivery, as is now the case in most LPCs.

Under the LPC outcomes, either or both elements may be combined with other course skills (for example Practical Legal Research or Advocacy) or with one or more core practice areas to simulate legal practice. Therefore there is considerable flexibility in the way in which these skills may be addressed on the compulsory course and the extent to which they can be developed to the suit the emphasis and focus of the particular LPC.

### **Stage 2 - Vocational Electives**

Students must complete three distinct Vocational Electives, which may be undertaken with the same provider as the Stage 1 elements or with one or more different providers.

Each Vocational Elective will be allocated to an elective group, according to the practice area covered. Students will be required to complete electives from at least two different groups to ensure that each student

undertakes electives that cover different aspects of practice. A list of elective groups is attached at [annex 5 \[#annex5\]](#). This list will be re-issued from time to time.

The [LPC Outcomes \[https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes\]](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes) for Stage 2 require providers to produce a statement of outcomes for each elective using the model provided.

## **Appendix to the outcomes document**

The Appendix to the LPC outcomes sets out the preliminary knowledge that students will be expected to have prior to starting the course. In particular, the preliminary knowledge makes explicit the skills elements that will need to have been developed before embarking on the course.

The Appendix sets out the teaching and learning requirements that form the basis for course design and which are supplemented by the assessment requirements detailed in section 4 of this pack. The aim is to achieve clarity for students and course providers about the parameters within which there may be flexibility in course design and delivery.

Notional learning hours have been adopted for highlighting the course study requirements, as this is a widely used and understood terminology in higher education. Minimum notional learning hours are set for the Core Practice Areas, Course Skills and Professional Conduct and Regulation. There is flexibility above these minima to enable providers to shape their course provision to meet student and any partner firm expectations.

A face-to-face requirement has been set to ensure there are opportunities for all students to interact with each other and with tutors and to develop together their professional skills, attitudes and behaviours.

## **Assessments and Awards**

### **Legal Practice Course Assessment Requirements**

The SRA has set out the minimum standards for the assessment of students on LPCs. Providers assessment strategies must comply with these requirements.

### **Assessment Strategies**

Each provider must produce a comprehensive learning, teaching and assessment strategy to demonstrate its overall coverage of the course outcomes and compliance with these requirements. The assessment strategy of a provider should reflect its emphasis and coverage of the outcomes; set assessments that are primarily transactional in nature;





use an appropriate variety of supervised assessment methods; indicate its policy on the use of permitted materials in assessments, in accordance with specific provisions in the LPC Assessment Requirements, and the impact its policy will have on its design of assessments; and anticipate the needs of disabled students and set out how individual needs will be identified and addressed.

## **Core Practice Areas**

- Business Law and Practice, Property Law and Practice and Litigation should each be assessed by way of one core practice assessment lasting a minimum of three hours. A core practice assessment must take the form of an examination or some other form of supervised assessment.
- Each core practice assessment may be split into two parts, and in that event each part may take place on different days:
  - The two parts should be within the same period of assessment,
  - One assessment mark should be derived by aggregating the marks from the two parts, with any weighting reflecting the balance of the course.
- For all purposes in these guidelines, the two parts constitute one core practice assessment and a student must take both parts of the assessment - one part cannot be carried over to a later assessment period.
- A minimum of 5% of marks in each core practice assessment must be allocated to Professional Conduct and Regulation.
- There must be two parts to the Litigation assessment, one Civil and one Criminal, with the marks for each aggregated to derive the overall mark. The weighting of each part must be explicit and recorded on the transcript.

## **Professional Conduct and Regulation**

Professional Conduct and Regulation will be assessed in two ways:

- A discrete assessment which must last for a minimum of two hours and which should normally be taken during the final assessment period of Stage 1 of the course.
- An assessment within each of the three core practice assessments in which at least 5% of the marks must be allocated to Professional Conduct and Regulation.

The marks are not to be aggregated: a student must pass the discrete assessment in Professional Conduct and Regulation in order to pass the subject.

The Solicitors Accounts Rules must be assessed separately under supervised conditions. The assessment must last for a minimum of two hours (including any reading time).



## **Skills Areas**

Each of the five Course Skills of Practical Legal Research, Writing, Drafting, Interviewing and Advising and Advocacy shall be assessed once.

Assessments that cover skills outcomes alone need not be supervised. However, assessments that combine skills and either a core practice area or Professional Conduct and Regulation must be supervised.

Interviewing and Advising can be assessed in separate parts. An overall competent/not yet competent decision must be made.

Advocacy is to be assessed in the context of either Civil or Criminal or both.

Each skills assessment may be combined with:

- Core practice area assessments, in which case a mark must be given for the core practice assessment and a competent/not yet competent decision made for the skills element, and one or more other skills assessments, in which case separate competent/not yet competent decisions must be given for each skill.
- Providers assessment strategies and assessment criteria must address the implications for students where skills assessments are combined with other skills or core practice area assessments.
- Each skill shall be assessed on a competent/not yet competent basis.

## **Vocational Electives**

Each Vocational Elective should have one assessment lasting a minimum of three hours. An elective assessment must take the form of an examination or some other form of supervised assessment.

The elective assessments may be split into two parts, and in that event

- Each part may take place on different days,
- The two parts should be within the same period of assessment,
- One assessment mark should be derived by aggregating the marks from the two parts, and
- For all purposes in these guidelines, the two parts constitute one elective assessment and a student must attempt both parts of the assessment. A mark for one part cannot be carried over to another assessment period.

## **Pass Requirements and Transcripts**

The pass mark for all core and elective assessments shall be 50%. Marks for Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments must be recorded on separate

transcripts, whether or not a student has studied for the stages in a separate or a combined way.

Each student transcript for Stage 1 shall include:

- Percentage marks for the three core practice areas including specific marks for criminal and civil litigation and the relative weightings of each part of the overall litigation assessment;
- The percentage mark for Professional Conduct and Regulation;
- The percentage mark for Solicitors Accounts;
- Competent/not yet competent decisions for each of the five skills areas;
- For each assessment the number of the attempt on which the student was successful and the date on which the successful assessment was undertaken; and
- The marks for any discrete assessments in Taxation and/or Wills and Administration of Estates undertaken by the student or information about the context in which the outcomes for these subjects were assessed.

Each student transcript for Stage 2 shall include

- percentage marks for each of the Vocational Electives undertaken with the provider, and
- the number of the attempt at which the student was successful and the date on which the successful assessment was undertaken.

Transcripts should not include reference to any grading or classification system the provider has chosen to use, although this may be recorded on a certificate.

## **Referrals and Re-sits**

Students may have three attempts at any assessment. If they are unsuccessful on the third attempt of a Stage 1 assessment, they fail that stage overall and Stage 1 of the course and all assessments must be re-taken.

A student who fails a Stage 2 assessment for the third time can either re-enrol on the course for that particular elective or start a fresh elective. If the student does not pass all Stage 2 assessments within five years of sitting their first Stage 1 assessment, they must complete both Stages 1 and 2 again, including all assessments. Similarly, if a student embarks on Stage 2 before passing all Stage 1 assessments, all the assessments (for Stages 1 and 2) must be passed within five years of their first attempt at the first assessment.

The SRA does not stipulate when providers should provide re-sits or whether re-sits should be offered only during designated assessment

periods or at other times during the course. Providers should, however, publish their re-sit timetable and assessment fee structure to students.

An individual student is required to complete all Stage 1 assessments with one authorised provider.

Any assessments (including re-sits) taken by a student must be based on the law in force at the time of the assessment, regardless of the law taught to the student during the course.

The student's transcript must show clearly the number of the attempt at which the student was successful and the date of their success.

Stage 2 assessments can be taken with one or more different providers. Each provider will need to give the student a transcript showing the title of the elective, the mark gained, and the number and the date of the attempt with that provider on which the student was successful.

## **Currency of Assessments**

To pass the full LPC (Stages 1 and 2) a student must pass all of their assessments within a five year period. The date used for determining the start of the five year period is the date on which the student attempted their first assessment, whether or not they were successful. (Not the date the results were confirmed or published or the date of enrolment on the course.)

This requirement applies to all students, whether studying full-time, part-time or a combination of both.

## **Concessions**

The SRA requires that providers gain confirmation from students at the start of each assessment that there are no reasons why they should not sit the assessment at that time or why they might subsequently submit a request for a concession. The student may also be required to confirm that any requests for reasonable adjustments have already been submitted to, and considered by, the provider.

This approach should limit the frequency with which students seek concessions. However, providers must have published procedures in place to deal with students' applications for concessions should they arise, for example if a student is taken ill during an assessment or if they have not previously disclosed a disability.

If, exceptionally, an examination board agrees that a student has mitigating circumstances that might have affected their performance in a particular assessment, despite their confirmation that it was appropriate for them to attempt the assessment, that attempt can be disregarded for

the purposes of the information recorded on the transcript and for the operation of the three attempts rule.

Providers assessment regulations must not allow condonation or compensation between assessments or subjects.

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

The outcomes for the LPC are competence standards. These are the standards that all students must achieve to demonstrate their ability to qualify and practise as a solicitor. All students must be assessed against the competence standards, the outcomes, but providers must make reasonable adjustments to the way the outcomes are assessed to ensure that students are not disadvantaged as a result of a disability.

Providers should anticipate the types of requests for adjustments that might be made by disabled students and consider in advance how such requests might be dealt with or how any potential disadvantages might be designed out of the assessment process.

Providers should publish accessible information for students on how and when to submit requests for reasonable adjustments. Providers are encouraged to consult the [Equality Act Codes of Practice](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice) [<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice>].

## **Providers Assessment Strategies**

### **General Principles**

Each provider's assessment strategy must be sufficiently rigorous to ensure the credibility of its courses. Assessments must address depth and realism as well as coverage.

Assessment criteria and guidelines given to those setting and marking assessments must recognise the importance of the outcomes to the assessment strategy and the professional nature and significance of the assessments being taken. The assessments must revolve around transactions of the type encountered in practice. Assessments must be in the English or Welsh language only.

Individual assessments must cover a representative and robust selection of the relevant outcomes, but are not required to cover all outcomes in any individual set of assessments. Each provider's assessment strategy must indicate its approach to Wills and Administration of Estates and Taxation.

Students should be prepared to be assessed on all of the outcomes for a given subject. Providers must not indicate to students what will or will not be assessed in any particular assessment.

Providers must anticipate the needs of disabled students and consider the accessibility of their assessments to all students.

## **The Award**

The provider must determine what, if any, academic qualification will be awarded to successful students. The SRA expects providers to adhere to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications when making any such award and to consider the advantages to students and employers of the use of qualification titles that are recognisable and consistently used.

It is for a provider to determine whether to accept credit awarded by another provider; for example, when considering the nature of any award to be made to a student who completes only Stage 2 of the LPC with that provider or is given exemptions from the LPC under their Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy. The SRA encourages providers to adhere to good practice embodied in the Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior Learning published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

## **Assuring Quality and Standards**

### **Quality Assurance**

The SRA must be confident that:

1. The quality of all LPCs allows diligent students, wherever and however they study, to have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills of legal practice such that they can achieve and demonstrate the learning outcomes of the LPC.
2. The standard of all LPCs is at least at the threshold level that it has set
3. The assessments measure student achievement appropriately, in accordance with the LPC outcomes, and the assessments are conducted rigorously and fairly, in line with the assessment requirements.
4. The procedures for recognising prior learning is adequate.
5. The university has in place procedures for recruiting and appointing external examiners.

The SRA's arrangements for assuring the quality and standard of all LPCs incorporate the following features:

1. Initial authorisation of providers, reviewed from time to time, to ensure that providers have their own systems to verify and review the quality and standards of their provision.
2. Initial validation of courses, for a fixed term, to ensure that the LPC outcomes and assessment requirements are appropriately designed into the course.



3. Training newly appointed external examiners.
4. A requirement on a provider to submit an annual factual and evaluative report, that incorporates a summary and analysis of student feedback and student achievement.
5. A facility to undertake a visit to review provision where there is evidence that the quality and/or standards of the course(s) are at risk and require that corrective measures are put in place.

## **The role of External Examiners**

From the 2014/15 academic year, all providers will be required to appoint and pay external examiners. The appointment of external examiners will be consistent with the QAA Quality Code. In addition to any provider training, they may undertake training provided by the SRA from time to time.

The primary role of the external examiner will be:

- To advise on the standards set by a provider and on student achievement.
- To visit a provider at least once in an academic year.
- To be responsible for all Stage 1 & 2 subjects as well as a thematic area.
- Prepare an annual report which the provider must send to the SRA and the SRA must be permitted to use the evidence contained in the reports and require the provider to take appropriate action if concerns are raised.

## **External examiners approval of the assessment process**

External examiners should approve all assessments papers that form part of the summative assessments for the course(s). They must also approve the corresponding assessment criteria and marking schemes. It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that external examiners receive this information in time for them to consider and comment on the drafts and for the provider to respond to any recommendations. External examiners should look, in particular, at the depth and understanding of the assessments and the coverage of the learning outcomes. External examiners will consider the clarity of the language used in the assessments and of the instructions to students.

## **External examiner visits**

All provider appointed external examiners must visit the provider at least once in each academic year to meet with the programme team and students and attend assessment boards.

The meetings with students should focus on the following:



- The quality of teaching;
- Students understanding of what is required of them during the course;
- Students progress towards achievement of the outcomes;
- The success of the course in preparing students for practice;
- Students understanding of the professional ethos of the course;
- How the design and structure of the course supports student development and achievement; and
- Support available to students, both generally and to those with particular needs.

## **Review visits**

The SRA will visit a provider and review provision where there is evidence that the quality and/or standards of provision may be at risk. Indicators of risk will include, but not be limited to evidence that the integrity of assessments has been compromised, a significant loss of the course/teaching team, extreme and unexplained assessment results, and a recruitment of students that is not matched by an increased resource allocation.

# **Applications for authorisation to provide LPCs and for the validation of courses**

## **Overview**

Initial applications for approval from the SRA to provide an LPC must be made in two parts.

- The first part should address the organisation's capacity and commitment to deliver and maintain LPCs of an appropriate quality and standard.
- The second part should deal with the specific course or courses for which validation is sought. The criteria and the evidence requirements are set out in [annex 3 \[#annex3\]](#).

Once authorised, any subsequent applications by an authorised provider for the validation of courses within the authorisation period will need to address only the second part of the application.

Courses will be validated for a period of five years. Providers will need to apply for fresh validation before the end of this period, to ensure there is continuity in the provision of validated courses. If significant changes are to be made to a course once validated, either a fresh application or an application to vary a validated course will need to be made. The SRA will periodically review a provider's authorised status. Such reviews will be informed, in part, by visits to providers. In the event that the SRA



withdraws the authorised status the provisions of the Monitoring of Courses Regulations will apply.

The application procedure must be followed by providers seeking to provide Stages 1, 2 or both.

The SRA expects to receive applications from different types of organisation. The term provider is used to describe any organisation that is seeking or has gained authorisation to deliver an LPC, regardless of its status and its experience of delivering LPCs. The SRA will authorise organisations, e.g. a university or a private company, rather than units or departments within organisations.

## **The application process**

A provider may apply for authorisation only in the first instance or it may apply for both authorisation and course validation in one application. The application must address each of the authorisation and/or validation criteria in turn, using the sections and the numbering for the evidence requirements given in [annex 3 \[#annex3\]](#). Supporting evidence should be provided in a file. The file should be indexed, again using the sections and the numbers in annex 3.

If a provider is seeking validation for more than one LPC, it must identify clearly in its submission each of the different courses (and/or stages of the LPC) for which it is seeking validation and the aspects of the application that are common to all courses, e.g. the assessment regulations, and the aspects that vary between courses, e.g. the allocation of notional learning hours. The SRA will consider and decide on each course separately, but it will aim to avoid unnecessary requests for duplicate information.

The application will be considered by a panel established by the SRA. The panel will identify if any further information or clarification is needed and request this from the provider. Any additional information will need to be submitted to the SRA before a meeting between the SRA panel and a team representing the organisation and the course team is held. The meeting may take place at the provider's premises, or another location chosen by the SRA.

The meeting will be used to clarify any outstanding issues after which a decision will be made.

The panel may decide to accept the application, refuse the application, or accept the application subject to conditions. If the application is accepted, with or without conditions, the provider will be required to enter into a formal agreement with the SRA.

The SRA will regard information submitted by the provider in support of its application as confidential. SRA decisions to authorise a provider and

to validate a course will be regarded as public information.

## **Application for a review of a decision**

Providers may request a review of a decision.

The request for review, together with the required fee, must be made in writing to the SRA within one month of receiving notification of the original decision.

## **Application fees**

Fees payable to the SRA for the consideration of applications are as follows:

- £1000 for initial authorisation, plus course validation fees.
- £1000 for the validation of an LPC if only one member of the SRA Panel is required to attend the validation event.
- £1400 for the validation of an LPC if two members of the SRA Panel are required to attend the validation event.
- £250 for an application for validation of one additional Vocational Elective.

Providers will be invoiced on receipt of their application.

The fees are calculated on a cost recovery basis and will be reviewed annually.

## **Variation of validated courses**

An authorised provider must ensure that each of its LPCs is individually validated by the SRA. Where providers offer multiple LPCs, there will inevitably be some overlap or commonality between the courses; however, where a course is marketed as a distinct option onto which students can enrol, that specific course must be discretely validated.

An authorised provider wishing to introduce a new LPC must make a validation application to the SRA, as described above.

Providers will wish to make changes to their courses, in the light of experience and with a view to enhancing the quality of their provision. The SRA does not wish to deter providers from enhancing their courses, in fact it will look in a provider's annual report for evidence that providers are reviewing and improving their courses on an on-going basis. However, if a significant change to a validated course is planned the original validation decision will need to be reviewed by the SRA.

An authorised provider wishing to vary a validated LPC will need either to submit a fresh and full validation application for that course or one for variation to a validated course.



A full application will need to be made if:

- The format in which the course is taught and delivered is to be changed fundamentally e.g. from full-time to part-time, or from a one year to a two year course.
- An existing LPC is to be taken-over from another provider.

An application to vary a validated course will need to be submitted if a provider wishes to make the following changes:

- To increase the maximum number of students that can be enrolled by more than 10% of the maximum number stated in the original validation application.
- To revise the teaching and learning strategy in a way that would significantly affect the student learning experience, e.g. to replace lectures with e-learning.
- To revise the assessment strategy and/or assessment regulations in a way that extends beyond clarification of the strategy/regulations submitted with the original validation application.
- To remove or significantly alter any aspects of the quality assurance arrangements set out in the original application.
- To alter the admissions policy and/or practice in a way that goes beyond clarification of the policy/practice included in the original application.
- To move the course to new teaching premises.

An application to vary a validated course will need to be submitted to the SRA at least six months before students are due to enrol on the revised course. The provider should structure the application around the criteria for the validation of courses. It should identify which of the criteria are relevant to the changes proposed and submit the rationale for the proposed changes and any evidence to support the case for change. The validation panel will request any further information or seek clarification, as necessary. The validation panel will not normally need to meet with the course team or visit the provider when considering an application to vary a validated course; however, it will reserve the option to do so.

The panel will need to be satisfied that the course requirements and the criteria for course validation will continue to be met if the course is varied as proposed.

The original period of validation will not be affected by a successful application to vary a validated course.

The circumstances in which an application to vary a validated course, set out above, are not exhaustive. Providers are encouraged to contact the SRA if they are uncertain whether a variation application is necessary. Generally, a full validation application will be needed when a provider plans to market a new course and to enrol students on to a distinct course. Generally, a variation application will be needed when the

planned changes follow detailed consideration by the provider and will make a significant change to the course and its delivery and/or they would need to be communicated to students who had applied to join the course.

If a provider over-recruits (i.e. exceeds by more than 10% the maximum number of students set out in the initial validation application) to a particular course in a way that was not planned and had not, therefore, been the subject of an application to vary the validated course, it will need to demonstrate that adequate provision has been made for the increased number of students. An application to vary a validated course will need to be submitted to the SRA within one month of the over-recruitment position becoming apparent to the provider. The application will need to address the requirement that courses must be adequately managed and resourced. If the evidence submitted with the application does not demonstrate that this requirement will be satisfied the validation panel may identify that the quality and/or standard of the course is at risk and decide that a visit should be made to the provider. Requirements may be imposed as a condition of continued validation.

## **Validation of additional Vocational Electives**

An authorised provider that seeks to offer an additional Stage 2 Vocational Elective can apply for it to be validated at any time. The application will be sent to an LPC validation panel chair or member for consideration. The provider will need to submit a statement of outcomes for the elective in accordance with the outcomes document and demonstrate compliance with validation requirements contained within [annex 3 \[#annex3\]](#).

## **Collaborative arrangements**

If provision is to involve delivery and/or assessment of aspects of the course by more than one organisation, it will be known as collaborative provision.

1. A provider that wishes to deliver and assess all or any aspect of the LPC must apply to the SRA for both authorisation as a provider and validation of its specific courses.
2. If an organisation that is not an authorised LPC provider wishes to deliver (but not assess) an aspect of the LPC this must be arranged in partnership with an authorised LPC provider. The authorised provider will need to seek SRA validation of the jointly delivered course and must set and mark any assessments taken by students. The SRA will hold the authorised provider accountable for all aspects of the course.
3. Any organisation that is setting and/or marking LPC assessments must be authorised by the SRA in its own right and put forward a course or courses for validation.



4. Practitioners may be involved with LPC provision in many ways that will not constitute a collaborative arrangement, including in design, internal approval and review activities, in the preparation of course materials or as lecturers delivering aspects of a course. Such engagement is encouraged by the SRA; the authorised provider will manage and be responsible for the quality of such input and of the course overall.

### **Examples**

- A firm wishes to work in partnership with a university that is authorised to deliver an LPC. The firm wishes to teach a vocational elective and elements of the Property Law and Practice core area. However, it does not wish to be involved with the examination/assessment arrangements. The authorised LPC provider will need to seek validation from the SRA for the course which the firm is delivering. The firm will not need to make an application in its own right. The university will be responsible for all aspects of assessment and the SRA will hold the university accountable for all aspects of the course.
  - A commercial organisation that is an authorised provider of the LPC wishes to work with a university to deliver some vocational electives to its students. It is intended that the university will both deliver and assess the electives in its own right. The university will need to become an authorised LPC provider and apply for validation of the Stage 2 vocational electives.
  - A provider secures input from a local law society and a practitioner group to review and contribute to course materials to ensure they reflect the realities of practice. The provider remains responsible for the standards and quality of the course and the course materials. No special validation/authorisation arrangements are required, although the practitioner involvement might be a positive feature to be highlighted in a provider's validation application or annual report.
5. The SRA will not authorise a provider to offer assessments alone (i.e. without teaching and learning provision). Where two or more organisations wish to work together to offer between them the teaching and learning and assessment of an LPC, the organisation that will be responsible for the assessments will need to be authorised. If both organisations are to be involved with the setting, conduct and marking of assessments both will need to be separately authorised as LPC providers. In such cases a joint application for validation of the course would be appropriate.

### **Criteria for collaborative arrangements**

In addition to the standard criteria that apply to all LPC provision ([see annex 3.\[#annex3\]](#)), when considering applications for an LPC to be

provided by way of a collaborative arrangement the SRA will need to be satisfied that:

- Responsibilities between the partners are clear and documented.
- Students will be able to understand and access information about the respective responsibilities of the partners, e.g. with regard to the receipt and investigation of complaints.
- Assessment will be the responsibility of a provider authorised by the SRA.
- There is effective communication between those involved with the delivery of the course both within and between each of the partner organisations.
- The course will provide a coherent learning experience for students.

Any submission to the SRA for validation to provide a collaborative course will need to include a copy of a binding agreement between the partners that identifies their respective responsibilities and the specific arrangements for the following:

- The target market/student cohort for the course
- The recruitment of students
- The marketing of the course
- The provision of information to students
- Staff recruitment, induction and development
- Receiving and investigating student complaints
- Assessment
- The award of academic credit
- The compilation and issue of student transcripts
- Monitoring of student progression
- On-going monitoring of the quality of the course
- Quality assurance.

For a partner organisation that is not applying to become authorised to deliver the LPC in its own right, the following is required:

- Information about that organisation's core business.
- The rationale for its decision to become involved with LPC provision.
- Its understanding and experience of the solicitors profession.
- Its experience of delivering courses at graduate/postgraduate level.

## **Student information and support**

### **Information to potential students**

Providers have the responsibility to provide clear and useful information to those making choices about where to study and which particular course to follow. To enable potential students to make informed choices the SRA requires all providers to supply a standard set of information about their provision.



Information to provided should include:

- The requirement to provide evidence of their Qualifying Law Degree/CPE
- The different LPCs it provides, e.g. full and part-time Stages 1 and/or 2.
- Key features of its different courses, e.g. where there is an emphasis on particular types of practice.
- The maximum number of students in the different types of teaching and learning sessions.
- The maximum number of students it will recruit onto each course.
- Entry requirements.
- The providers policy on the accreditation of prior learning, e.g. will students who have studied Stage 1 with another provider be accepted onto Stage 2 of the provider's course.
- Any academic qualification that will be awarded to successful students.
- The learning resources available to support the course, including library and IT provision.
- The student: teaching staff ratio.
- The percentage of teaching staff who are qualified as solicitors or barristers.
- The percentage of teaching staff with higher level teaching qualification.
- Fees
- Pastoral support, including dedicated careers guidance staff.

Information about a provider's LPC will be published on the SRA's website in a standard format. A link will be given to the provider's website and providers will be required to ensure that the information given to the SRA for publication on its website is kept up to date.

## **Information for enrolled students**

Once enrolled on a course students need a clear understanding of what is required of them and of the regulations within which the course operates. This will help them to take responsibility for their own learning and to succeed. The information should be available in different formats. The SRA does not specify the exact nature of the information to be made available to students but it will look for evidence during initial validation and on-going monitoring that students are able to:

- Make connections between their teaching and learning and the LPC outcomes.
- Make informed choices about the course they follow and, where appropriate, make choices within the course on which they are enrolled.
- Understand what is required of them, in terms of attendance and preparation for, and participation in, teaching and learning sessions



- and private study
- Identify the level of performance required in assessments
- Understand the consequences of failing an assessment
- Understand the nature of the academic and pastoral support available to them and how it can be accessed.

## Student complaints

Authorised providers should have in place policies and procedures to receive, investigate and determine student complaints. Information about these policies and procedures should be readily accessible to students.

The SRA will expect students to have exhausted a provider's procedures before it will consider a complaint directly from a student.

## Exempting law degrees and integrated courses

An Exempting Law Degree (ELD) combines the academic stage of training with an LPC. A provider seeking validation of an ELD will need to demonstrate that the design of the course will meet both the outcomes of the [Joint statement](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/academic-stage-joint-statement-bsb-law-society/) [https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/academic-stage-joint-statement-bsb-law-society/] and the [Learning Outcomes](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes) [https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/#outcomes] for the LPC. An Integrated Course (IC) incorporates the Foundations of Legal Knowledge (as set out in the Joint Announcement) and a Legal Practice Course.

An Exempting Law Degree or an Integrated Course may cover Stage 1 of the LPC alone, or Stages 1 and 2<sup>1</sup> [note1]. The SRA has not specified the period over which an Exempting Law Degree or an Integrated Course must be undertaken, although providers should take into account the notional learning hours identified as necessary for an LPC when designing an Exempting Law Degree or an Integrated Course.

In addition to the issues that must be covered in all applications for validation of an LPC, providers will need to address the following in their application for validation of an ELD or an Integrated Course:

- The aims and objectives of the ELD/IC
- The point(s) at which students can and must enrol on the ELD/IC
- The point(s) at which student may leave the ELD/IC and any alternative award(s) available to them
- Any admission and progression rules
- How the academic and vocational elements of the course are linked or integrated during the ELD/IC, with regard to teaching, learning





and assessment

- The award made to a student on completion of the ELD/IC.

A provider will need to state how the assessment requirements for LPCs have been reflected in the assessment requirements for the ELD/IC. It must also demonstrate that the LPC outcomes will be assessed in a way that is equivalent to the requirements for an LPC.

The application will be considered by the SRA, taking into account any internal validation process and requirements of the Joint Statement.

## **Accreditation of prior learning**

The SRA will permit a provider to award credit for prior certificated learning to a student who has successfully completed the Bar Vocational Course in respect of all or any of the following Specified LPC Outcomes:

- Core practice areas: Litigation
- Course skills: Advocacy, Drafting, Practical Legal Research
- Two vocational electives.

The SRA will permit a provider to award credit for prior certificated learning to a student who has successfully completed the Bar Professional Training Course in respect of all or any of the following Specified LPC Outcomes in the following:

- Core Practice Areas: Litigation
- Course Skills: Advocacy, Drafting
- Two Vocational Electives

The credit may only be awarded where the students have completed either the Bar Vocational course or the Bar Professional Training Course no earlier than five 5 years prior to the date of his or her enrolment on the LPC course.

The permitted credit is in relation to the Specified LPC Outcomes only and is permitted on the basis that a successful graduate of the Bar Vocational Course or Bar Professional Training Course has demonstrated competency in those course outcomes which are equivalent to the specified LPC Outcomes. Where credit is awarded the student may be exempt from both attendance and assessment in respect of those specified LPC Outcomes for which credit has been given.

Where the provider has determined that students who successfully complete the LPC will receive an academic award, the provider must ensure that the accreditation of prior learning being sought in respect of the specified LPC Outcomes is equivalent to the outcomes specified in the provider's validated course including the level at which the outcomes have been achieved. The SRA expects providers to consider each application for accreditation of prior learning according to the provider's

own procedures which should adhere to the good practice and guidelines embodied in QAA guidelines for accreditation of prior learning.

The provider must ensure that it provides prospective students with clear guidelines on any fee involved in dealing with the application, any discount available in respect of the credit and how the award of credit will affect the award or qualification classification.

Where accreditation of prior learning has been awarded for all or any of the specified LPC Outcomes, the provider must ensure that this is recorded on the student transcript of results.

Any provider wishing to seek approval of a bespoke LPC course for Bar Vocational Course and Bar Professional Training Course graduates who have met the Specified LPC Outcomes, should make an application to the SRA according to the requirements set out in section 6 of this information document.