



LAW SOCIETY
OF IRELAND

HOW TO BECOME A SOLICITOR

The Law Society of Ireland is the educational, representative and regulatory body of the solicitors' profession in Ireland. It exercises statutory functions under the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2008 in relation to the education, admission, enrolment, discipline and regulation of the solicitors' profession. It is governed by an elected Council, which is supported by a full-time executive led by the Director General.

This publication should at all times be read in conjunction with the Acts and Regulations referred to above.

The Law School is located at the Law Society's headquarters at Blackhall Place, Dublin 7.



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OVERVIEW

The Law Society is the educational, representative and regulatory body of the solicitors' profession in Ireland. It exercises statutory functions under the Solicitors Acts 1954-2008 in relation to the education, admission, enrolment, discipline and regulation of the solicitors' profession.

The Society works to improve access to the law generally and also provides representation, services and support for solicitors themselves.

Solicitors are professionally trained to provide clients with skilled legal advice and representation on all legal matters. Most solicitors work in private practice, but, commercial and industrial organisations also employ solicitors, as does the public sector.

The work of solicitors varies as widely as the community they serve. However, the work of a solicitor may fall broadly into one or more of the following categories:

ADVISING PRIVATE CLIENTS – covering a wide range of personal and business life and including such matters as marital problems, consumer complaints, disputes with neighbours, planning inquiries etc.

BUSINESS - the business world of trade and commerce, companies, contracts, and banking. Solicitors advise business clients on the numerous and detailed provisions of company, partnership, arbitration, insolvency, drafting, environmental, commercial, consumer, intellectual property and information technology law.

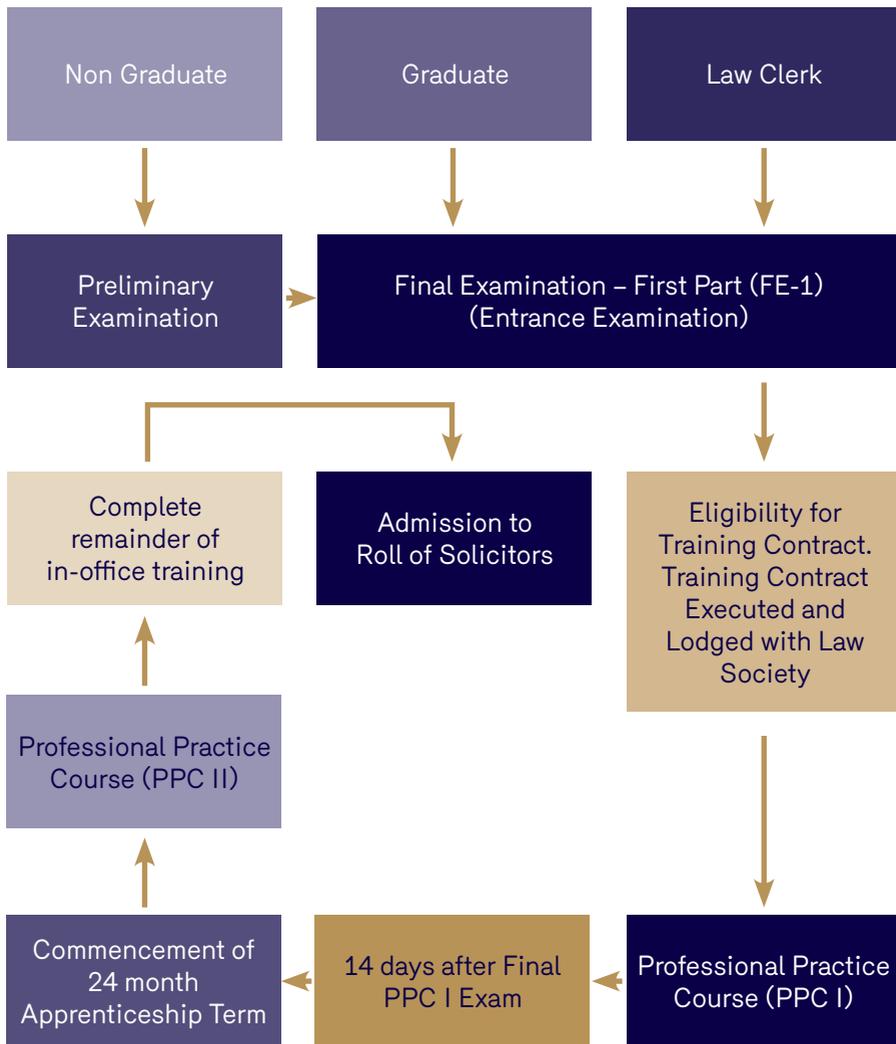
LITIGATION – initiating or defending civil proceedings in the courts or by reference to arbitration or settling such claims or disputes 'out of court'. Prosecuting or defending criminal cases – including regulatory (or white collar) crime.

CONVEYANCING – the buying and selling of property and the arranging of loans, the preparation of title deeds, leases, and countless other legal documents. Some solicitors are expert in the buying and leasing of commercial properties such as factories, shops and hotels.

WILLS, PROBATE & ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES – advising on and preparing wills [planning for tax where appropriate], the administration and distribution of funds passing on death [whether by will or otherwise], or contained in a trust, and the settlement of tax liabilities.

This booklet is an outline of the current procedures for qualification as a solicitor in the Republic of Ireland. Further details on all of the information contained herein may be obtained from the Law Society of Ireland.

STEPS TO QUALIFICATION



THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

This is an examination for non-graduates. This examination is held once a year, usually in March. To sit the Preliminary Examination a candidate **must** be at least **21 years old**. The examination consists of the following three papers:

- English
- Irish Government and Politics
- General Knowledge

The pass mark in each paper is 50% and all three papers must be passed at one sitting in order to pass the examination. Candidates are allowed a maximum of three attempts. The closing date for applications is normally six weeks before the examination.

WHO IS EXEMPT FROM THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION?

(A) GRADUATES

Degrees awarded by any of the degree awarding institutions in Ireland or the United Kingdom are exempt from this examination. Holders of such degrees are not required to apply for exemption from the Preliminary Examination but they must provide a copy of their degree certificate when applying to sit the Final Examination - First Part.

(B) FOREIGN GRADUATES

Holders of degrees from other universities may apply to the Education Committee for exemption from the Preliminary Examination. Such applications should be accompanied by a certified copy of the degree certificate together with the application fee. The certificate should be certified by a practising lawyer in the applicant's original jurisdiction, or a practising lawyer admitted in the Republic of Ireland. The certificate must state that the copy is a true copy of the original and that the original has been produced to the person so certifying.

(C) LAW CLERKS

Law Clerks/Legal Executives with at least **five years** experience who hold a Diploma in Legal Studies (or equivalent qualification) or a Law Clerk with in excess of **ten years** experience, even if he/she does not hold a Diploma in Legal Studies, may apply to the Education Committee for an exemption from the Preliminary Examination. Such applications must include:

- a covering letter
- a certified copy of the Diploma in Legal Studies (where appropriate)

- evidence of having worked as a Law Clerk for a minimum of five years or a minimum of ten years (where appropriate)
- an up-to-date curriculum vitae
- references from two practising solicitors (outlining the work of the applicant)
- application fee

(D) HOLDERS OF OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

Holders of other qualifications may apply to the Education Committee for an exemption on the basis of such qualifications. Such applications should be accompanied by a certified copy of the qualification(s) and a detailed covering letter.

NOTE: Applications to the Education Committee should be sent to The Secretary, The Education Committee, The Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place, Dublin 7 and should include the correct application fee.

Check website www.lawsociety.ie for current fees.

THE FINAL EXAMINATION - FIRST PART

The Final Examination – First Part (FE-1) is the entrance examination to the Law Society of Ireland. Only those who have passed or gained exemption from the Preliminary Examination can sit this examination. It is held twice a year, usually in Spring and Autumn. Full details on this exam including the rules governing the FE-1 are available from the Law School and on the Law Society’s website www.lawsociety.ie.

It consists of the following eight papers:

- Company Law
- Constitutional Law
- Criminal Law
- Equity
- European Union Law
- Law of Contract
- Law of Tort
- Real Property

PRIZES FOR THE FINAL EXAMINATION - FIRST PART

The Overend Scholarship was established by William Overend, a former President of the Law Society of Ireland, and is presented on an annual basis to the candidate who achieves the highest marks in the Final Examination – First Part.

Prizes are also awarded to the best performers in each of the eight Final Examination – First Part subjects. Further details of these prizes can be obtained from the Law School and the Law Society’s website – www.lawsociety.ie

After completing the academic stage of the qualification process applicants can apply to the Law Society to commence the PPC I. However, before applying to the PPC I all applicants must have secured a training contract with a training solicitor to provide training and experience over a two-year period. This training, known as the in-office training period, commences after completion of the PPC I and it is the core of the solicitor training programme. During the course of the in-office training period trainees must have the opportunity to receive instruction and obtain experience in a variety of areas of law as well as in practice in skills such as interviewing and advising; legal research; legal presentation skills; legal writing and drafting; negotiation and professional development and advocacy. This experience and practice must be undertaken under the supervision and guidance of a training solicitor.

TRAINING SOLICITORS

Not all solicitors are eligible to become a training solicitor. In order to become a training solicitor the solicitor must be a practising solicitor who has been in continuous practice for at least four years. A practising solicitor is defined as a solicitor who is engaged full time in the provision of legal services as:

- a sole practitioner, or
- a partner in a firm of solicitors, or
- a solicitor in the whole time employment of a body corporate, or
- a solicitor in the full-time service of the State within the meaning of section 54 (as substituted by section 62 of the Solicitors (Amendment) Act, 1994) of the Solicitors Act, 1954.

A training solicitor must be able to offer the full range of legal experience required by the regulations. Further information is provided in the PPC I application pack which can be obtained from the Law School.

Once an eligible training solicitor has been found, applicants must apply to the Law Society for consent to enter into a training contract.

APPLYING FOR CONSENT TO ENTER INTO A TRAINING CONTRACT

In order to apply for consent to enter into a training contract an applicant must obtain the PPC I application pack which is available from the Law School. This pack contains all the relevant application forms necessary to apply to enter into consent and contains information about applying to the Law Society to commence the PPC I. Consent must be issued to an applicant before a place on the PPC I is confirmed.

BREAKDOWN OF TRAINING CONTRACT:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| In-office training post-PPC I | 11 months |
| Attendance on PPC II | 3 months |
| In-office training post-PPC II | 10 months |
| TOTAL | 24 MONTHS |

OR

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| In-office training pre-PPC I | 4 months (maximum) |
| In-office training post-PPC I | 11 months |
| Attendance on PPC II | 3 months |
| In-office training post-PPC II | 6 months |
| TOTAL | 24 MONTHS |

CREDIT

A trainee may apply for credit (up to a maximum of four months) for work done pre-PPC I in the office of the training solicitor. In-office training pre-PPC I is optional. The time for which credit is sought must be completed in one block within the six months immediately preceding attendance on the PPC I. A trainee must have completed 18 months of his/her in-office training before applying for credit. (Credit Application forms are available from the Law School).

IN-OFFICE TRAINING POST-PPC I

The in-office training period is the core of the training programme. Training solicitors are required to provide the trainee solicitor with reasonable and appropriate instruction and experience in the area of legal practice set out, respectively, in **Block 1** and **Block 2** (below) **AND**, in two of the remaining three Blocks (3, 4 and/or 5):

BLOCK 1

Conveyancing and Landlord and Tenant Law

BLOCK 2

Litigation

BLOCK 3

Wills, Probate and Administration of Estates

BLOCK 4

Commercial Law
Corporate Law
Insolvency Law

BLOCK 5

Criminal Law and Procedure
Employment Law
European Union Law
Family Law
Intellectual Property Law
Pensions Law
Planning and Environmental Law
Revenue Law and Taxation
Other specialised area(s) of legal practice

The period of in-office training is considered to be a vital and essential component of the overall training programme. In-office visits are carried out as a way of ensuring that flexible, interactive and responsive in-office training programmes are in progress.

TRAINEE SALARIES

While working in the office of the training solicitor and during the PPC II trainees should be paid in accordance with the National Minimum Wage Act, 2000. In certain circumstances, trainees may also be entitled to similar payments on the PPC I.

SECONDMENTS

A trainee, with the prior consent of the Law Society and the training solicitor, may spend up to a maximum of eight months of the in-office training period working in employment elsewhere other than in the training solicitor's office. Under the Education and Training Regulations, trainees are allowed engage in work (in Ireland or abroad) provided it "...would be advantageous to such a trainee in the furtherance of his/her education or training (or both) and his preparation for admission to the solicitor's profession".

THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSES

The Law Society's Law School runs two full-time courses for trainees – the PPC I and the PPC II. The Professional Practice Courses are full-time training courses. The courses are practice-oriented and their purpose is to instruct a trainee to do the work of a solicitor. Instruction is given almost entirely by practising solicitors and by members of the Law Society's staff. The courses are assessed through continuous assessment and end of course examinations.

PRIZES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSES

The Findlater Scholarship was founded in 1877 by the late Sir William Findlater, D.L., a past President of the Law Society of Ireland. This prestigious award is presented by the Law Society for the best performance in the PPC I & II examinations. There are also prizes available for each subject on the PPC I.

PPC I

Applicants for the PPC I must have:

- Passed or gained exemption from the Preliminary Examination
- Passed the Final Examination - First Part
- Found an eligible (practising) solicitor to act as a training solicitor

The PPC I takes place annually and usually starts in September and runs until March-April (inclusive of examinations). The following are the subjects covered on the PPC I:

- Foundation Course
- Applied Land Law
- Probate & Tax
- Business Law
- Litigation (Civil & Criminal)
- Skills (Civil and Criminal Advocacy, Interviewing and Advising, Legal Research, Legal Presentation Skills, Legal Writing and Drafting, Negotiation and Professional Development)
- Legal Practice Irish (LPI)

PPC II

After eleven months of the training period the trainee returns to the Law School to attend the PPC II. This course is eleven weeks in duration and is counted as part of the twenty-four months training period. Having completed the PPC II the trainee must return to the office of the training solicitor and complete the outstanding period of time - ten months if the trainee has not gained credit for work done prior to PPC I and six months if credit has been obtained.

The PPC II usually begins annually in April and runs for eleven weeks inclusive of examinations. The following are the compulsory subjects covered on the PPC II: Professional Practice, Conduct and Management (PPCM), Family & Child Law and Employment Law. There is also a range of elective choices.

A full list of electives is available from the Law School – lawschool@lawsociety.ie.

ADMISSION TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS

Trainees who have passed all of the examinations set out above and successfully completed the training programme may apply to have their names entered on the Roll of Solicitors. Before having their names entered on the Roll, the training solicitor is required to swear that the trainee is a fit and proper person to become a solicitor. Application forms are sent out automatically by the Law School when students are eligible to have their name entered on the Roll.

SECURING A TRAINING CONTRACT

INTRODUCTION

A training contract can be undertaken in a private firm, in the legal office of a company or institution, in State and semi-State bodies. Not all training contracts are advertised and often only secured because fortuitously an applicant applied at the same time a firm decided they wanted to recruit. The apparently random nature of the recruitment process makes the process harder and it is easy to get discouraged.

Guidance to those looking for a training contract is available. A seminar “Finding Your Training Contract” is held annually, for details go to the Law Society website www.lawsociety.ie. Also on the website successful trainee solicitors describe how they secured a training contract.

TRAINEE RECRUITMENT REGISTER

Those who have passed all the FE-1 examinations can apply to join the Trainee Recruitment Register. The register is a list of candidates looking for training contracts. Any firm or solicitor wishing to recruit a trainee can access the register through the Law Society’s website.

It is a self-servicing system where applicants join the register by uploading their CV directly to the Law Society’s website. There is also a provision to amend or remove CV’s from the register. Anyone wishing to join the register can apply on-line. Once the application is completed the CV will be displayed on the register immediately.

To access the register login to the Law Society website www.lawsociety.ie, click “**Becoming a Solicitor**” click “**Irish Applicants**” then click “**Trainee CV Register**” and follow the on-screen instructions.

FUNDING

FEES

The fees for the PPC I & PPC II are eligible for tax relief. Further details and application forms for tax relief on tuition fees (I.T. 31 Form) may be obtained from the Revenue Commissioners. Trainees may obtain information from their Local Tax Office or alternatively from the Revenue's website at www.revenue.ie.

A full list of fees is available from the Law School and on the Law Society's website www.lawsociety.ie under fees and funding.

HIGHER EDUCATION GRANT SCHEME

The PPC I and II are accepted as post-graduate study for grant purposes. For more information see <http://www.studentfinance.ie> and to apply see <https://susi.ie> and particularly <https://susi.ie/eligibility/postgraduate-student>. It is highly advisable to make an application for grant support as soon as possible and this can be done before applying the Law School. It is also a good idea to look carefully at the grant levels available and the criteria to assess the likely level of award.

LAW SOCIETY BURSARY SCHEME

The Law Society operates a limited bursary scheme for each course. Application forms will be available on commencement of the course. Any student who considers that his or her own resources or available family resources are inadequate to fund their study may apply for a bursary.

LAW SOCIETY ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Law Society Access Scholarship Programme aims to assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to gain access to professional legal education. Depending on applicants' individual circumstances, the Scholarship can assist with:

- Reduced/waived FE-1 exam fees - up to a maximum of four full sittings within two years of joining the Programme
- Access to core texts related to FE-1 exams, through the Law Society of Ireland's library
- Reduced/waived Professional Practice Course fees
- Maintenance funding

Application is by interview and by means of an application form. Applications are accepted at any time of the year. For further details please contact a member of the Student Development Service on tel: 01 672 4802 or email studentadvisor@lawsociety.ie or visit the Law Society's website www.lawsociety.ie – fees and funding section.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following is available either on-line from the Law Society website www.lawsociety.ie or from the Law School Information desk:

- Syllabi for all exams
- Rules governing the FE-1
- Application forms for all exams
- Examiners' reports for the FE-1
- Past papers for all exams
- Credit application forms
- A Schedule of fees
- A list of preparatory courses for the Preliminary Exam and the FE-1
- Application packs for the PPC I are available from reception.

For further information on any aspect of qualifying as a solicitor in the Republic of Ireland, contact the Law School lawschool@lawsociety.ie or access the Law Society's website www.lawsociety.ie and click on Becoming a Solicitor.

All of the information contained in this booklet is available on the Law Society's website www.lawsociety.ie. The Law Society is not responsible and shall not be bound by errors in, or omissions from, this booklet. The Law Society reserves the right to revise, amend, alter or delete courses of study and academic regulations at any time by giving such notice as may be determined by the Education Committee of the Law Society in relation to any such change.

As at January 2016.

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