

2. APPRENTICESHIP

STRUCTURE

The underlying principle of the professional education of a solicitor is that it involves a combination of practical in-office training and formal academic instruction. The period of apprenticeship as it is known will be for a fixed period of two years

The two year apprenticeship runs as follows:

- (a) From 17 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 - spent in-office
 - (b) January to December 2023 - spent at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, (Easter, Summer and Christmas periods spent in the office)
- and
- (c) January 2024 to the end of the two-year apprenticeship term - spent in office.

FINDING A MASTER AND REGISTRATION OF APPRENTICESHIP PAPERS

In order that a student can take up their place at the Institute, he/she must register with the Law Society by 5.00 p.m. on Monday 22 August 2022. He/she must have a Master (a solicitor with whom the applicant proposes to serve his/her apprenticeship). Registration involves the completion and lodging of a set of forms provided by the Society. Finding a Master is the responsibility of the applicant. Any firms wishing to advertise for an apprentice will be listed on the "Masters List" on the Law Society website. It is unlikely that there will be many on the list as most firms receive many applications from individuals contacting them directly. Details of all solicitors are available on our website under "Solicitor Directory".

It should be noted that applicants do not need to wait until they have been offered a place at the Institute before registering with the Society and are advised, on securing a Master, to register conditionally. If they do so they will be in a position to take up a place even if it is offered late. If they do not receive an offer the conditional registration will lapse.

CHARACTER AND FITNESS

Please note that applicants must satisfy the Society's Education Committee as to their suitability to be accepted as students of the Society and produce for that purpose such evidence as to education, character and fitness as the Committee may require. No applicant will be registered if he/she is an undischarged bankrupt or if he/she has been convicted of a criminal offence of such a nature as to make his/her registration undesirable or if for any other reason he/she fails to satisfy the Committee as to his/her fitness to be a solicitor. A copy of the Society's Character and Fitness Policy is enclosed. If you have any queries regarding the policy, please email darren.patterson@lawsoc-ni.org

WHO CAN ACT AS A MASTER?

It should be noted that the applicant's proposed Master must also be acceptable to the Society. The acceptability of Masters is governed by separate regulations. The principal requirements of these regulations is that the proposed Master must have been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors for at least seven years and must have been a principal for at least three years and that the practice or organisation "provides satisfactory opportunities for the adequate training of a registered student". Further details as to the requirements of these regulations can be obtained from the Society. Both Master and Apprentice must co-operate with the Society should the Society require an assessment to be made of the quality of training or of the progress of the apprentice during apprenticeship.

TRANSFER OF APPRENTICESHIP

Permission from the Society should be obtained with regard to any proposed transfer of Apprenticeship **in advance** of the transfer taking place.

SALARY

The Society's minimum salary for apprentices starting on or after 1 September 2022 will be the relevant UK national minimum hourly rate which will, as of April 2022 be:

- (i) for those aged 21-22 years £9.18 (National Minimum Wage)
- (ii) for those aged 23 or over £9.50 (National Living Wage)

3. POST APPRENTICESHIP**APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS AND FOR A PRACTISING CERTIFICATE**

Once a student has completed the period of apprenticeship, paid registration and admission fees and passed all the relevant examinations and satisfied the Society that he/she has received a proper training, the student can make application to be enrolled as a solicitor of the Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland, subject to compliance with regulations. Once enrolled he/she may apply for a Practising Certificate.

PERIOD OF RESTRICTED PRACTICE

Newly qualified solicitors are restricted from practising otherwise than as employees for a three year period from the date of their first practising certificate (ie. after three years of practising certificates). This can be reduced to two years by attendance at the Society's Continuing Professional Development Scheme. Those solicitors who wish to reduce their restricted practice period from three to two years must be able to prove to the satisfaction of the Society that they have completed a total of 45 hours CPD over the two year post admission period (ie. within 2 years from the **date of admission**). This may be subject to change.

4. SOLICITORS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1976 AND EDUCATION REGULATIONS

The summary of the procedure above is based on the relevant provisions of the Solicitors' Admission and Training Regulations 1988, as amended, including:

- requirement to have a law degree or other degree plus knowledge of the Core Subjects. *Regulation 8(1) and 8(2)*
- requirement to serve apprenticeship. *Regulation 10*
- suitability to be accepted as a registered student. *Regulation 9*
- payment of a wage. *Regulation 12*

REGULATION 18

"Without prejudice to any of the powers contained in these Regulations, the Council [of the Law Society of Northern Ireland] may, in any case (including a case of non-compliance with the Regulations) in which it considers that the circumstances justify such a course, relax or dispense with any particular requirement of these Regulations on such terms as they may deem appropriate."

SOLICITORS (NI) ORDER 1976 AS AMENDED

Under Article 6(3) of the Solicitors (NI) Order 1976 as amended, subject to regulations made under (1) (f) on an application made by a person seeking to be admitted as a solicitor, the Society may –

- (a) waive the application of any provision of regulations under paragraph (1) to that person or
- (b) any decision taken by the Society with respect to that person under those regulations.