



# Guidance Notes for Prospective Students

## EG13

The Law Society of Northern Ireland as the governing body of the solicitors' profession in Northern Ireland, has in exercise of its statutory powers, prescribed the legal education and training necessary to qualify as a solicitor in Northern Ireland.

### **1. TRAINING TO BECOME A SOLICITOR**

#### **1a. THE LAW DEGREE ROUTE**

An applicant using this route must, before being accepted as a student of the Society establish to the Society's satisfaction:-

- (a) that he/she possesses an acceptable law degree and
- (b) that he/she has been offered a place in the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Belfast.

Please note that the applicant's law degree must contain eight core subjects (see 1b.(a) below). Those applicants who have not been examined in the Law of Evidence should advise the Society and the Institute at the time of the relevant application so that arrangements can be made for them to sit the appropriate examination.

#### **1b. NON-LAW DEGREE ROUTE**

An applicant using this route must, before being accepted as a student of the Society, establish to the Society's satisfaction

- (a) that he/she possesses an acceptable degree in a discipline other than law and has attained a satisfactory level of knowledge of the following subjects:

Constitutional Law	Law of Tort	Law of Contract
Criminal Law	Equity	European Law
Land Law	Law of Evidence	

Please note that students who commenced their degree course prior to September 1996 should have Company Law as a core subject. Company Law has now been replaced by European Law. (See above).

- (b) and that he/she has been offered a place at the Institute.

For applicants with a non-law degree the Masters in Law (M.Law) [Formerly MLegSc], Master in Legal Science awarded by Queen's University, Belfast will be accepted as sufficient evidence of the satisfactory level of knowledge of the relevant subjects. All enquiries regarding this course should be directed to the School of Law, at Queen's University, Belfast.

## **2. TRAINEESHIP**

### **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 traineeship, as it is known, will be for a fixed period of two years

The two year traineeship runs as follows:

- (a) From 4 September 2023 to 31 December 2023 - spent in-office
  - (b) January to December 2024 - spent at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, (Easter, Summer and Christmas periods spent in the office)
- and
- (c) January 2025 to 3 September 2025 - spent in office.

### **FINDING A MASTER AND REGISTRATION OF TRAINEESHIP PAPERS**

In order that a student can take up their place at the Institute, he/she must register with the Law Society by no later than 5.00 pm on Monday 21 August 2023. They must have a Master (a solicitor with whom the applicant proposes to serve their traineeship). 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 a trainee will be listed on the ["Training Opportunities" page](#) on the Law Society website. Details of all solicitors are available on our website under ["Solicitor Directory"](#).

Please note, applicants are not required to wait until they have been offered a place at the Institute before registering, and are advised to conditionally register with the Society upon securing a Master. If they do not receive an offer from the Institute, 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.

### **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 Trainee 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 trainee during their traineeship.

### **3. 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.

# Completing the Online Application Form

Any supporting documents that you are required to upload are outlined in these notes and marked with this icon



## Section 1: "About You"

### (a) Personal Details

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about yourself:

- Title
- First Name
- Middle Name(s)
- Surname
- Previous name(s)
- Date of Birth
- Gender

Please use your full name, as it appears on your birth certificate, and do not use any unofficial nicknames or abbreviations.



- Clear scan of your original birth certificate (short or long form).
- Your birth certificate will only be used to confirm your identity, no other data from it will be used or recorded.



- Name change evidence.
- If your name has changed from that on your birth certificate – please upload the relevant evidence e.g. Deed Poll Certificate, Marriage Certificate.

### (b) Contact Details

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about yourself:

- Street Address
- Town/City
- County
- Postcode
- Contact Telephone Number
- Email Address

Please supply your personal contact details only. This should **not** be your in-office details.

All written correspondence will be sent to these details, so it is important that you have consistent access. It is the trainee's responsibility to notify the Society of any changes in their contact details.

## Section 2: "Education Background"

### (a) Undergraduate Studies

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about your education:

- Degree Title
- Awarding Institution
- Awarding Region/Country
- Year of Award
- Degree Classification
- Core Subjects

This section is for undergraduate studies only. If you have more than one undergraduate degree please include the degree which is being used for entry to the course.

You should include the full and correct title of your degree including the subject and your institution. Please do not include any abbreviations e.g. QUB.

If your degree award is pending, please enter the year it is due to be awarded.



- You must upload a clear scan of your original undergraduate degree certificate.
- If you have not yet completed your studies please upload an official letter from the institution confirming your studies, status and expected completion date.



- Please provide a clear copy of your final degree transcript(s) for all years of study.
- If you are still studying, please send scans of your up-to-date interim degree transcript and official confirmation of any final year modules.

We can accept online verification via your institution, such as GradIntel, Parchment or HEDD to [registration@lawsoc-ni.org](mailto:registration@lawsoc-ni.org).

If so, please upload your unofficial transcripts on the online form and send an email to the above email address to confirm official verification has been requested.

### (b) Other Higher Education

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about your education:

- All other higher education studies.

Please list any and all other higher education qualifications, such as postgraduate courses, partial degree studies (i.e. CertHE) and any overseas studies. You should include the qualification title, subject, institution name and year of award. We may ask for further evidence of these studies at a later date. We do not require details of studies [below Level 4](#).

## Section 3: "Master and Office Details"

### (a) Proposed Master

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about your Master:

- Title
- First Name
- Surname
- Job Title

Please obtain these details from your prospective Master and/or their organisation.

### (b) Proposed Organisation

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about your organisation:

- Name
- Organisation/Firm Reference
- Postal Address
- Town/City

Please obtain these details from your prospective Master and/or their organisation.

Your Organisation should be able to provide their Firm Reference number. This is a unique number provided to your Firm by the Society. It is optional to provide this information but is helpful in linking your details to that of your Organisation and Master at the point of registration.

If your Organisation has more than one office, please ensure you add the details for the branch in which your Master and yourself will be based.

## Section 4: "Referees"

### (a) & (b) Referees 1 and 2

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information about your referees:

- Title
- Full Name
- Job Title
- Organisation Name
- Postal Address
- Email Address

Your referees must be from persons of standing in the community. They can be from employment, volunteering, charity work, religious institution, education, family friend or activity groups e.g. Scouts.

Your referee(s) cannot be a member of your family or your intended Master.

If possible, you should submit the references along with your application. Your referee may, if they wish, supply the reference directly to us by email to [registration@lawsoc-ni.org](mailto:registration@lawsoc-ni.org).

Please note, the Society does **not** contact your referees on your behalf to request or chase a reference and we **cannot** supply a reference template.



- Please upload scans of your two original references. Each reference must be hand signed and dated.
- If your referee is emailing their reference to us it must come from an official account and not a personal account such as Hotmail or Gmail.



## CHECKLIST

**Please check through your registration carefully before submitting to the Society**

Have you fully completed and returned the following?

- 1. Online Application Form for Registration as a Student of the Society
- 2. Uploaded signed and dated EF1B Petition and Supplementary Declaration Form
- 3. Uploaded signed and dated EF1E Traineeship Contract (Indentures)  
Date of Commencement of contract being **not earlier than 4 September 2023**.
- 4. Uploaded signed and dated EF1F Confirmatory Note for Masters.  
*This form must be completed by your Master.*
- 5. Uploaded a scanned copy of your original Birth Certificate.
- 6. Uploaded scanned copies of your original degree documents, including certificate and transcripts or, if applicable, official letters confirming your status.
- 7. Two written references as to character from persons of standing in the community.
- 8. Access NI Basic Check (email verification)

**Documents must be lodged with the Law Society no later than 5.00pm on Monday 22 August 2022.**