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Initial training of lawyers in the European Union

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Ireland

General description

Is initial training offered, if yes is it compulsory?

To become a solicitor in Ireland candidates are required to complete compulsory training which includes a Professional Practice Course and a 2-year in-office training contract.

The principal objective of this professional legal education is to equip trainee solicitors to know and understand the principles of law underlying the core areas of practice and to be able to apply their knowledge in a practical way and to adapt to ongoing legal changes and developments in business and technology.

The Law Society of Ireland is leading the way regarding technological advances in legal training and education delivery and methods. These are kept under constant review to keep abreast of all innovative developments.

The Professional Practice Course is designed primarily for those intending to work as practising solicitors (whether in general or commercial practice or in-house) and contains strong practical content.

The 2-year of in-office training is a vital and essential component of the overall training to become a solicitor. The requirement that each trainee solicitor completes a training contract facilitates a newly qualified solicitor in having sufficient practical training to commence practice on their own from the day they qualify as a solicitor.

Does initial training differentiate between categories of trainees, e.g. for in-house lawyers and advocates?

All trainee solicitors undertake the same initial training. The aim of the training provided by the Law Society of Ireland is to equip trainee solicitors (in the context of the statutory framework relating to solicitors) to:

1. know and understand the principles of law underlying the more common areas of practice and to be able to apply their knowledge in a practical way and to adapt to ongoing legal changes and developments in those areas;
2. understand the needs of clients in the more common areas of practice and to communicate clearly with clients while at the same time effectively meeting their legal needs;
3. appreciate the ethical standards which govern the practice of law and the sense of justice which must always guide lawyers in their practice; and
4. develop practitioner skills and competencies in non-legal areas that directly affect their capacity to act as legal practitioners into the future e.g. emotional competencies and business development.

Which entities are responsible for organising initial training?

- The Law Society of Ireland organises the Professional Practice Course
- The 2-year training contract (In-office traineeship) is provided by a practising solicitor (private practice

and law firms).

What is the statutory basis for initial training?

The initial training provided by the Law Society of Ireland follows the statutory framework relating to solicitors.

The Solicitors Acts gives the Law Society of Ireland exclusive jurisdiction in relation to “the provision of courses and the holding of examinations for the education or training (or both) of.....persons seeking to be admitted as solicitors”.

The Solicitors Acts reserves conveyancing and probate exclusively for solicitors. The Courts Acts give solicitors the right to argue in any court. Solicitors are also allowed hold funds on behalf of clients and give binding undertakings. Solicitors in Ireland are allowed practice on their own from qualification. The consequence of this framework is that all solicitors on qualification must be competent in conveyancing, probate and litigation. Furthermore, they should be competent to run a solicitors practice and have a good knowledge of ethical, practice and financial rules applicable to solicitors.

Legal basis:

- [Solicitors Act 1954](#)
- [Solicitors \(Amendment\) Act 1994](#)
- [Courts Act 1964](#)

Access to the initial training

Are there conditions for accessing the training?

Entry into the legal profession in Ireland is regulated in order to ensure that those providing legal services have the necessary knowledge and competence when consumers will often be unable to assess, in advance of the transaction, the precise services they need, or the quality of the service that is offered. The entry requirements that the solicitor must fulfil before he or she is free to practice, and the professional standards to which he/she is expected to adhere in his/her dealings with clients, provide the basic level of quality assurance that the consumer needs.

The Law Society of Ireland sees great value in diversity and has always provided access to initial training to graduates and non-graduates. A University degree is not a pre-requisite for qualification as a solicitor. The Society imposes no restrictions on the numbers wishing to enter the profession or seeking places on initial training course.

The steps to qualify as a solicitor in Ireland are as follows:

1. Preliminary Examination (non-graduates only)
2. FE-1 Entrance Examination to the Law Society of Ireland
3. Professional Practice Course
4. In-Office Training
5. Admission to the Roll of Solicitor

1. Preliminary Examination (non-graduates only)

There is no graduate requirement for those seeking to qualify as solicitors. The Preliminary Examination is an initial assessment point for non-graduates seeking to qualify. To facilitate the diverse range of applicants seeking to qualify as solicitors, there are categories of qualifications the Society pre-recognises and therefore are exempt from sitting the Preliminary Examination. For example a bona fide legal executive with five or more years' experience will be exempted from having to sit the Preliminary Examination. A full list of exempted qualifications can be viewed on the website: <https://www.lawsociety.ie/becomingasolicitor>

2. FE-1 Entrance Examination to the Law Society of Ireland

The Final Examination - First Part (FE-1) is the entrance examination to the Law Society of Ireland. It is held twice a year, normally in spring and autumn and consists of eight papers on core legal subjects.

1. Company Law
2. Constitutional Law
3. Law of Contract
4. Criminal Law
5. European Union Law
6. Equity
7. Law of Property
8. Law of Tort

This examination ensures that trainee solicitors, who come from different educational backgrounds and third level studies of all disciplines, whether in arts, humanities, engineering or science, commence their practical training in the Law Society of Ireland with a consistent standard of knowledge in those eight subjects.

Before commencing the Professional Practice Course at the Law Society of Ireland all candidates must have secured a 2-year training contract with an eligible training solicitor.

The 2-year in-office training is a vital and essential component of the overall training to become a solicitor. The Society provides many free resources to assist candidates in finding a Training Contract. These include:

- Finding your Training Contract Seminars.
- CV and Cover Letter Workshops.
- Q&A Sessions with past trainee solicitors.
- Guides on securing a training contract in the current market.
- Digital alerts when training contract roles are advertised online.

What is the main recruitment procedure? If it is competitive - who runs it?

In keeping with an emphasis on inclusion, diversity and student-centred delivery, the Law Society of Ireland positively engages with those interested in pursuing the solicitor qualification by way of a proactive outreach programme.

The Society hosts a suite of free events and programmes which encourage candidates to consider a career in law and offers an insight into the role of a solicitor in practice.

These include:

- Annual Becoming a Solicitor Symposium
- Solicitors of the Future Work Experience Programme
- Legal Ambitions Summer School
- Opens days, Career days and Third-level Graduate events.
- Street Law Secondary School Programme.

Are there alternative access routes to the training?

A key objective for the Law Society of Ireland is to remove barriers to becoming a solicitor and achieve greater diversity within the solicitor profession. The Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT) is a conversion test which enables lawyers qualified in certain countries outside the Republic of Ireland to qualify as solicitors in this jurisdiction.

Northern Ireland and England & Wales

Generally solicitors qualified in Northern Ireland and England & Wales are not obliged to pass any subject in the QLTT. But instead need to apply for a [Certificate of Admission](#).

Morgenbesser Applicants

Following the decision of the European Court of Justice in Christine Morgenbesser v Consiglio Dell'Ordine Degli Avvocati di Genova, 13 the Solicitors Acts, 1954 to 2001 (Apprenticeship and Education)(Recognition of Qualifications) Regulations 2004 were introduced to provide a mechanism whereby persons from EU member states who have appropriate qualifications and training can apply for exemption from the application to them of

parts of The Solicitors Acts, 1954 to 1994 (Apprenticeship and Education) Regulations, 2001.

The 1991 Regulations

These Regulations make provision for the admission of EU/EEA lawyers. Such lawyers seeking admission under these Regulations are required to sit and pass the QLTT

A national of a Member State of the European Union who is qualified to practice as a lawyer in their home Member State, may be able to register as a foreign qualified solicitor under the [Establishment Directive \(98/5/EC\)](#).

Reciprocal arrangements

The Society has entered reciprocal arrangements with California State Bar, the New York State Bar, the Pennsylvania State Bar, the New Zealand Law Society and the Law Society of Scotland. An arrangement was also entered into with the Law Society of New South Wales. Given the reciprocal recognition arrangements now in place in Australia this arrangement is now available to all Australian solicitors. The requirements for lawyers from the aforementioned jurisdictions generally mirror the requirements imposed by these jurisdictions on Irish solicitors.

Barristers

Barristers who qualified in Ireland can transfer to become solicitors without the necessity of undergoing the full training programme prescribed for trainee solicitors - per Section 51 of the [Solicitors \(Amendment\) Act, 1994](#).

Format and content of the initial training

What is the duration and time frames of the training?

Professional Practice Course

The Professional Practice Course from the Law Society of Ireland commences in September and runs until June of the following year. It is a full-time course designed specifically to equip trainee solicitors with extensive future-focused legal knowledge, innovation and technical skills.

Hybrid Professional Practice Course

The Society also offers a Hybrid Professional Practice Course which delivers an optimised blended learning experience. This is a part-time 2-year course that commences in December of each year.

The combination of online lectures with face-to-face tuition provides a flexible route into practice without the traditional requirement to be onsite in the Law School for an extended period.

2-year in-office training

The 2-year in-office training is a vital and essential component of the overall training to become a solicitor. Trainees 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.

A training solicitor the solicitor must be a practising solicitor who has been in continuous practice for at least four years.

In-office visits are carried out by the Law Society's Traineeship Supervisors as a way of ensuring that a flexible, interactive and responsive in-office training programmes is in progress.

How is the training organised?

All formal training programmes are run by the Law Society centrally on its own campus. Some examinations and

courses are provided online.

Who are the trainers?

The Professional Practice Course is practice-orientated and instruction is given by the Society's staff, practising solicitors and industry leaders.

- Lectures are supported by small tutorial and skills groups of between 6 and 20 trainee solicitors working together on legal problems.
- Classes are almost all delivered by practising solicitors who are experts in their own areas of practice.
- The associate faculty includes solicitors from large commercial firms, solicitors working for the State, general practitioners and in-house lawyers.

The Society currently have in the region of 1,200 solicitors teaching on the PPC; that means that more than 10% of all practising solicitors are involved in educating the next generation of the solicitor profession.

What is the content and objectives of the initial training?

The aim of the courses provided by the Law Society of Ireland is to equip trainee solicitors (in the context of the statutory framework relating to solicitors) to:

1. know and understand the principles of law underlying the more common areas of practice and to be able to apply their knowledge in a practical way and to adapt to ongoing legal changes and developments in those areas;
2. understand the needs of clients in the more common areas of practice and to communicate clearly with clients while at the same time effectively meeting their legal needs;
3. appreciate the ethical standards which govern the practice of law and the sense of justice which must always guide lawyers in their practice; and
4. develop practitioner skills and competencies in non-legal areas that directly affect their capacity to act as legal practitioners into the future e.g. emotional competencies and business development.

The syllabus covers the following subjects:

- Skills: legal research, legal writing, commercial drafting , presentation skills, negotiation, interviewing and advising, and advocacy
- Dispute Resolution
- Business law
- Land law
- Law as Business - managing a legal practice;
- Professional Responsibility (including legal ethics)
- Probate
- Family law
- Taxation
- The Complete Lawyer (includes emotional competency, resilience, self-awareness and self-care strategies)
- Legal Practice Irish.

The Society's commitment, as always, is to enhance the skills and career opportunities of trainee solicitors. We strive to do this by providing a diverse range of advanced electives that cover core areas for every solicitor's practice, together with more niche innovative topics. Trainees have the opportunity to complete four advanced electives as part of their overall legal training.

Who designs the initial training programmes?

Law Society of Ireland staff with members of the Society's Curriculum Development Committee and Education Committee (which includes non-Society representation).

What methodology is used for the training?

The Law Society of Ireland has invested considerable expertise and time in developing the Professional Practice

Course to ensure that it meets the demands of the ever-changing practice of law and is also reflective of economic, social and technological developments. The Professional Practice Course is a well-rounded programme, which allows trainee solicitors to develop legal knowledge and skills to the highest of International standards, whilst also preparing for the reality of life as a solicitor.

Technology in the classroom

From 2013 onwards, the Society introduced the use of an iPad as the trainees' personal learning device, where much educational content is stored. This includes interactive multi-touch e-books, workbooks, links to legislation and case law, and personal study notes. The use of iPad in the classroom has led to more interactive small-group sessions, where trainees can draft legal documents on their device, look up current legislation and case law, and share information with one another. The iPad is used in conjunction with hard copy materials.

All compulsory and optional modules on the Professional Practice Course have incorporated iPad into their design or delivery. Over 60 interactive, multi-touch e-books have been created by staff as educational aids for trainees. These e-books contain video, audio, diagrams and other multimedia to assist trainees with different learning styles. Staff have received comprehensive training to maximise the potential of iPad and Apple technology in the classroom.

The introduction of this technology at the Law Society has fundamentally changed how our trainee solicitors learn and how our associate faculty teaches. Aside from providing trainees with a one-stop shop for all their course materials, iPads give trainees the opportunity to continue their learning outside of the formal class session, through e-lectures, for example. Similarly, the associate faculty has access to more in-depth resources when preparing for teaching sessions and our lecturers have been freed from the confines of the podium, allowing them to walk around the lecture hall, engaging trainees in discussion, all with an iPad in their hands.

The virtual learning environment (Moodle) is also used in the Professional Practice Course. This allows course teams to include activities in their courses such as the ability to enter discussion fora with their peers, submit assessments online, complete competency quizzes, complete course evaluations and view video lectures.

Skills, knowledge and expertise

Professional legal education at the Law Society of Ireland is subject to ongoing review with particular regard to the skills, knowledge and expertise trainee solicitors should master to succeed in the legal environment. New subject courses and approaches to learning are introduced where appropriate to reflect changes in skills, knowledge and expertise required. For example, more recent changes to the syllabus include increased coverage of the use of AI in the legal context.

The application of knowledge in a practical and applied way is advanced by the Society through on-site skills training, practical tutorials, workshops and Mooting.

Fundamental attributes of solicitors

Resilience, innovation and emotional intelligence are fundamental attributes of solicitors that are dynamic, mobile and adaptable, that can take advantage of growth and also adjust to recessionary or globalisation challenges. The Society's Psychological Services team integrate psychology alongside the

development of trainees legal knowledge through a suite of popular lectures and workshops. Themes explored include leadership, creativity, professional relationships, emotional intelligence and professional wellbeing.

What practical elements of the training are applicable to the trainees?

The Professional Practice Course is primarily for those intending to work as practising solicitors (whether in general or commercial practice or in-house) and has strong practical content. The requirement that each trainee solicitor completes a training contract facilitates a newly qualified solicitor in having sufficient practical training to commence practice on their own from the day they qualify as a solicitor.

How are trainees evaluated/assessed? How often and by whom?

Trainees engage in multiple forms of assessment across during the Professional Practice Course that assess the

diverse range of competencies required by an adaptive modern practitioner, including summative open-book assessment for core written subjects and more creative formative assessment for skills based work.

Over 150 external examiners and assessors and several public interest representatives are involved in the assessment of the trainees solicitors work.

Are there any training activities carried out in conjunction with other legal professionals? If yes: How does it work?

No.

What are the specificities regarding EU law training, linguistic training and European components of initial training, for example participation in CCBE or ELF activities?

- European Union Law is one of the eight subjects of the
- entrance examination
- EU law is further taught pervasively throughout the Professional Practice Course.

How many trainees are accepted for training? Are the numbers of trainees adjusted annually and by who?

There are no numerical restrictions on entry to training.

Termination of the initial training and qualification process

Does the initial training conclude with a final exam? How is it organised? Who is responsible for the exam?

The Solicitors' Acts give the Law Society of Ireland exclusive jurisdiction in relation to "the provision of courses and the holding of examinations for the education or training (or both) of...persons seeking to be admitted as solicitors".

The Professional Practice Course is designed to equip trainee solicitors to work competently, efficiently, and honestly in the principal areas of professional practice as a solicitor. Final subject examinations are the principal formal means by which this competence is determined. Trainee solicitors will have attended their lectures, tutorials and workshops. The essential standard for each examination subject is that of proficiency in the early years of practice in that particular subject area.

Over 150 external examiners and assessors and several public interest representatives are involved in the assessment of the trainees solicitors work.

Is there a further recruitment procedure to become a lawyer upon completion of the initial training?

Trainee solicitors who have passed final examinations 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 Society when students are eligible to have their name entered on the Roll.

Last update: 13/03/2025

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