



Solicitors
Regulation
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From the Chief Executive

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Sent by email only to: Charlotte.Parkinson@addleshawgoddard.com

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Dear Charlotte

Re: Covid-19: SRA guidance

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2020.

We understand the concerns you and your members have about the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak is having on junior lawyers, Legal Practice Course (LPC) students, solicitor apprentices and trainee solicitors.

The situation presents unprecedented challenges and we have been rapidly developing our approach to work out how we can best support solicitors and those seeking to become solicitors.

We have been talking daily to training course providers and other regulators to see what more we can do to help students and course providers, while maintaining standards. We have a statutory duty to make sure that those who are admitted as solicitors have the knowledge and skills necessary for practice.

As we have all seen, it is becoming increasingly clear that restrictions may continue for significantly longer than at first seemed likely. Our Board met last week and, after careful consideration, has decided that for a temporary period during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will relax our current assessment requirements.

For the LPC

We recognise that it will be challenging to meet our requirements for supervised assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, for this period, we have decided that we will relax our current assessment requirements for all parts of the LPC.

This means that for skills assessments and elective subjects, we will allow LPC providers to make alternative assessment arrangements. For the core LPC subjects, we will maintain our requirements for supervised assessment, but we will consider applications for online or remote proctoring of supervised assessments. We need to agree any proposed changes to assessments with individual providers and approval will be subject to review by us at any stage.

We appreciate that it may not be possible for all LPC course providers to change their assessment arrangements and that some students may still not be able to take assessments. We will remind training providers that training contracts can start before completion of the LPC.

There may be some students whose September 2020 training contract start date will be impacted. We appreciate that this will be frustrating for those individuals, but our decision is based on helping as many as we can, without undermining the integrity of the qualification.

Solicitor Apprentices

We will monitor the position for solicitor apprentices and future solicitor apprentices. We will of course consider any requests to us for flexibility about assessments from providers of solicitor apprentice examinations.

Trainee solicitors

Thank you for your points about trainee solicitors. We have published a Q&A on our website, which covers these areas particularly in relation to remote working, supervision and the length of the training contract. We hope that your members will find this helpful. The same principles set out in the Q&A will apply to those gaining Qualifying Work Experience in preparation for the introduction of the SQE. Please let us know if there are any other areas we can helpfully cover in the Q&A.

For the Professional Skills Course (PSC), we will take the same approach to assessments as we propose to do for the LPC and will relax our assessment requirements. We have already agreed to flexibility in the delivery and assessment of the PSC and expect to consider further requests in coming weeks.

For the PSC only, we are considering whether there is anything we can do to help trainees who need to complete the PSC for September admission. We will provide an update on this on our website in the coming days.

Our approach has been guided by the principle that we must be sufficiently confident in the security and integrity of examinations for what are one-off gateway qualifications. The impact on consumers of any arrangement that undermines the qualification route to becoming a solicitor is huge. This concern has been central to our decisions about how we approach our training and assessment requirements during the pandemic.

Yours sincerely



Paul Philip
Chief Executive
Solicitors Regulation Authority