

# Future structure of the Legal Practice Course Consultation

## Annex 1 – Background and context

### Background to the consultation

1.1 The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) was established in January 2006 to regulate solicitors. We have developed our own strategy and the first stage of an implementation plan.<sup>1</sup> Part of our strategy is concerned with setting standards of entry for the profession, namely:

“4.1(b) We will take steps to ensure that those joining the profession:

- Come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience;
- Meet appropriate standards of character, intellect, knowledge and skills;
- Are able to sustain client confidence;
- Understand and are able to sustain commitment to the rule of law;
- Can demonstrably uphold the principles governing those providing legal service; independence; integrity; the duty to act in the best interests of clients; and client confidentiality.”

Our strategic framework for delivering this part of the overall strategy is available to download: “Education, Training and Development for Solicitors – The Way Ahead”.<sup>2</sup>

1.2 The Legal Practice Course (LPC) is an integral part of the vocational stage of pre-qualification training, which also includes the successful completion of the Professional Skills Course and a period of work based learning, the training contract. Annex 3 shows the content and structure of the existing LPC. In May 2006, the Law Society Regulation Board (as the SRA was then known), drawing on the strategy outlined above and the Principles of Good Regulation (annexed to the strategy), decided that there should be a more flexible framework for the LPC. A framework for authorisation, delivery and assessment (the framework document) was published in May 2006 on the Law Society’s website.<sup>3</sup> The framework document articulates the principle that the Law Society Regulation Board’s regulation of courses should promote greater flexibility for LPC providers in the way they design and deliver their courses and correspondingly greater choice for students who wish to study upon such courses.

1.3 Responses to the framework document were received from LPC providers, firms and representative organisations. Discussions have also taken place with the LPC providers, SRA staff and members of the Education and Training Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sra.org.uk/about/strategy.page](http://www.sra.org.uk/about/strategy.page)

<sup>2</sup> [www.sra.org.uk/news/148.article](http://www.sra.org.uk/news/148.article)

<sup>3</sup> [www.lawsociety.org.uk/documents/downloads/becominglpcframework.pdf](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/documents/downloads/becominglpcframework.pdf)

## The context – pre-qualification review

2.1 The LPC review is one of three strands of work the SRA is pursuing as part of its examination of vocational training at the pre-qualification stage, the connections between which are set out in “Education, Training and Development for Solicitors – The Way Ahead”.<sup>4</sup> The others are

- A new framework for work based learning
- Assessment in professional responsibilities

It is proposed that a new framework for work based learning will introduce a more objective assessment of an individual’s readiness for admission as a solicitor and provide a route to qualification for LPC graduates who have not secured a training contract. Features of the new framework will include

- The development of a standard portfolio template to act as an assessment tool for the period of work based learning
- A development of the present training contract to a period of assessed work based learning involving an initial planning session and at least four review sessions and the submission of the portfolio to an accredited in-house assessor
- A route to qualification for individuals not working in an accredited organisation

This was the subject of an initial consultation document published on 11 August 2006. A further consultation against more detailed proposals on work based learning opened on 15 February 2007. It is anticipated that the work based learning regime will be introduced in 2010, after evaluation of a pilot which will run from September 2007 to September 2009.

2.2 The SRA agreed in May 2006 to pilot a common assessment in professional responsibilities which will be designed to assess outcomes relating to financial and business skills and client care and professional standards (practice rules based). The assessment will be delivered centrally, and the pilot will operate from September 2008 with a view to fully implementing the assessment in professional responsibilities in 2010.

2.3 The aim of these three areas of work is to move away from the current linear approach to training and to create a more coherent, flexible training process that allows individuals from different backgrounds and with different needs to qualify through different routes. The focus will be on outcomes that maintain and demonstrate achievement of the standards of entry to the profession.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.sra.org.uk/news/148.article](http://www.sra.org.uk/news/148.article)