



Law Society of Northern Ireland

Code of Conduct for Trainee Solicitors and Masters during the Period of In-Office Training

1. General

- (i) A trainee solicitor is expected to undergo his or her training to be a practicing solicitor in a diligent and responsible manner.
- (ii) While in the course of undergoing his or her in-office training, a trainee solicitor should act diligently and responsibly under the direction of his or her Master or other designated solicitor(s) working within the Master's office and conduct himself or herself in a manner consistent with the trust and confidence placed in him or her by the Master. A trainee solicitor should never represent himself or herself as a qualified solicitor.
- (iii) While the standards expected of a trainee solicitor are not as onerous as those expected of a qualified solicitor, the trainee solicitor should familiarise himself or herself with the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 as amended. The Order and regulations made under this Order are the legislative framework for the regulation of solicitors and trainee solicitors, with which the trainee solicitor should also be familiar. The trainee solicitor should also be mindful of additional statutory duties, such as those necessitated and imposed by Data Protection legislation and Anti-Money Laundering legislation.

2. Specific Obligations and Values

- (i) A trainee solicitor should at all times:
 - a. act in accordance with the terms of his or her indentures of apprenticeship (training contract)
 - b. act so as to maintain the trust and confidence of his or her Master; and
 - c. in the best interests of his or her Master's clients;
 - d. act with honesty and integrity in his or her dealings with others.
- (ii) A trainee solicitor should at all times act consistently with the core values of the solicitors' profession, which include:
 - a. acting with honesty and integrity;
 - b. upholding confidentiality; and
 - c. avoiding conflicts of interest.

- (iii) The duty of confidentiality required of a trainee solicitor in relation to the handling of client-related matters applies to all communications (written and oral) arising within the Master's office relating to a particular client, including the fact of the existence of the solicitor/client relationship between the Master's office and that client. Any matter relating to a client's business can only be disclosed with the consent of the Master and the client or by order of a court or statutory body exercising its designated powers.
- (iv) Where the trainee solicitor perceives that a conflict of interest arises in a particular matter between the interests of the trainee solicitor and those of the Master and/or those of a particular client of the Master, the trainee solicitor should immediately inform the Master of the nature of this perceived conflict and should abide by any appropriate and reasonable instruction of the Master as to how to proceed.
- (v) Where a trainee solicitor has a concern or query in relation to any aspect of the foregoing provisions of this Code the trainee solicitor may communicate with the Society's Professional Development Department.

3. Ensuring Proper Training

- (i) A trainee solicitor is entitled to a reasonable standard of training and should work together with his or her training solicitor to ensure a positive outcome in this regard.
- (ii) Both a trainee solicitor and his or her Master should together ensure that an up to date training record of work undertaken by the trainee solicitor is kept and that good working practices are learned and applied by the trainee solicitor.
- (iii) A trainee solicitor should address with the Master, as appropriate and reasonable, any concerns that the trainee solicitor may have as to the volume of work, whether too much or too little, he or she is asked to undertake or the level of guidance being received by the trainee solicitor in relation to such work.
- (iv) Where a trainee solicitor perceives that he or she has made a mistake he or she should immediately inform the Master. A mistake can and does occur and, if made, the trainee solicitor should so report it with honesty and integrity, irrespective of the potential consequences of doing so.
- (v) A trainee solicitor is expected to self-motivate and to consider what is needed for his or her own professional development. The trainee solicitor should, as far as practicable, keep up to date with legal developments relevant to the work he or she is asked to undertake.

- (vi) A trainee solicitor should seek to develop his or her own social and interpersonal skills and to propose solutions to client-related problems for consideration and discussion within the training solicitor's office.

4. Obligations of the Master

- (i) A Master should be familiar with the rights and obligations of the trainee solicitor under the terms of the Indentures of Apprenticeship (training contract) between them and of this Code of Conduct and should facilitate and ensure, as appropriate and reasonable, compliance with them.
- (ii) A Master should ensure that his or her trainee solicitor is duly instructed on ethical matters appropriate to the practice of law and the practice of the profession of a solicitor.

The undersigned Trainee Solicitor_____and the undersigned Master _____ each agree to facilitate and ensure compliance with the provisions of this Code of Conduct during the period of in-office training of the trainee solicitor.

Dated this _____ day of _____ 2025

Signature of Trainee Solicitor _____

Signature of Master _____