



Law Society
of Northern Ireland

EG13

**Guidance Notes for
Prospective Trainee Solicitors**

2025

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1. Training to Become a Solicitor

(a) The Law Degree Route - Regulation 8(1)

An applicant using this route must, before being accepted as a student of the Law Society of Northern Ireland ("the Society") establish to the Society's satisfaction:

- a) that they possess an acceptable law degree; and
- b) that they have been offered a place at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies ("IPLS").

Please note that the applicant's law degree must contain the eight core subjects.

(b) Non-Law Degree Route – Regulation 8(2)

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

- a) that they possess an acceptable degree in a discipline other than law and have attained a satisfactory level of knowledge of the core subjects; and
- b) that they have been offered a place at the IPLS.

The Masters in Law (MLaw) [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.

(c) The Core Subjects

The eight core subjects are as follows:

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

** 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 Company Law has now been replaced by European Law.*

*** Those applicants who have not been examined in the Law of Evidence should advise the Society and the IPLS at the time of the relevant application so that arrangements can be made for them to sit the appropriate examination.*

2. The Traineeship and The Master

(a) 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:

- 1) From September 2025 until December 2025: In-Office with your Master
- 2) From January 2026 until December 2026: IPLS (Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays spent in-office)
- 3) From January 2027 until September 2027: In-Office with your Master

(b) The Master

Each student must have secured a Master (a solicitor with whom the applicant proposes to serve their traineeship) in order to register with the Society.

The student's proposed Master must also be acceptable to the Society. The acceptability of Masters is governed by the Solicitors Admission and Training Regulations (Qualification of Masters) 1988 (as amended). The principal requirements of these regulations are:

- that the proposed Master must have been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors ("the Roll") for at least seven years;
- that the proposed Master 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.

If the proposed Master has never acted as a Master, does not meet the regulatory requirements and/or has not previously received approval from the Education Committee, they will be asked to apply for approval to act as a Master.

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.

Finding a Master is the responsibility of the applicant. Any firms wishing to promote for a trainee position will be listed on the [Training Opportunities](#) page on the Society website.

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

3. Registration with the Society

The Society, 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.

Under the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 ("the Order"), the Society acts as the regulatory authority governing the education, accounts, discipline and professional conduct of solicitors in order to maintain the independence, ethical standards, professional competence and quality of services offered to the public.

(a) Registration

In order that a student can take up their place at the IPLS, they must register online with the Society. The deadline for registration is: **5:00pm (BST) on Monday 18th August 2025.**

Each applicant will be registering as a student of the Society, commonly referred to as a trainee or trainee solicitor. The registration process is your commencement of this formal requirement.

Please refer to the section "[How to Complete the Online Form](#)" for details on what information and supplementary documents you should provide in order to register with the Society.

(b) 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 the applicant is an undischarged bankrupt or if the applicant has been convicted of a criminal offence of such a nature as to make their registration undesirable or if for any other reason they fail to satisfy the Committee as to their fitness to be a solicitor. A copy of the Character and Fitness Policy is included in the registration pack and on the Society website [here](#).

(c) Access NI Check

Applicants lodging registration papers with the Society need to obtain an Access NI Basic Check dated within 3 months of application. Details on how to obtain a check can be found [here](#). To send a verification link to the Society please select the share button on your NI Direct account and add the following address: registration@lawsoc-ni.org.

This verification link is only available for three days so please be mindful when sending this to us and that it will not expire before it can be viewed - for example over a weekend or during public holidays.

4. How to Complete the Online Form

Any supporting evidence that you are required to upload is 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) (if applicable)
- Surname
- Previous Name(s) (if applicable)
- Date of Birth
- Gender

Please use your full name, as it appears on your birth certificate. Please do not use any unofficial nicknames or abbreviations e.g. Joe instead of Joseph.

Evidence Required	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Name change evidence (if applicable) - 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:

- Postal Address
- Town/City
- County
- Postcode and Country
- 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 update to their contact details.

We recommend you save both registration@lawsoc-ni.org and noreply@jotform.com as safe senders.

Section 2: Education Background

(a) Undergraduate Studies

(b) Postgraduate Studies


In these sections you will be asked to supply the following information about your undergraduate and postgraduate level education:

- Qualification Title
- Subject
- Classification
- Awarding Institution
- Awarding Region/Country
- Month and Year of Award

You are limited to a maximum of two undergraduate level qualifications and a maximum of two postgraduate level qualifications.

You should include the subject and title as it appears on your qualification certificate.

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

Evidence Required	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We only require documentary evidence of the qualification(s) being used to meet the academic and core subject requirements. ○ <u>If your qualification has been awarded</u>, please upload a clear scan of the award certificate(s) <u>and</u> full transcript(s). ○ <u>If your qualification is pending award</u>, please upload a clear copy of your interim transcript to include all pending modules. ○ We can also accept online verification via your institution's verification system e.g. HEDD, GradIntel or Parchment. These should be sent to registration@lawsoc-ni.org.

(c) Core Subjects

In this section you will be asked to confirm which core subjects you have met or are due to meet by means of your qualifying law degree. Each core subject will be verified via evidence supplied (as above).

Please refer to page 3 "[Training to Become a Solicitor](#)" for details on the core subjects.

Section 3: Master and Office Details

(a) Your Proposed Master

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

- Title
- First Name(s)
- Surname
- Job Title e.g. Head of Litigation, Partner, Director
- Professional Email Address

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

(b) Your Proposed Organisation

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

- Organisation Name
- Organisation/Firm Reference Number (if known)
- Organisation Postal Address inc. Postcode

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 you will be primarily based.

Section 4: References

In this section you will be asked to supply the following information for each referee:

- Title
- Full Name
- Job Title
- Organisation Name
- 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. You may upload your references with your application if available. Your referee may, if they wish, supply the reference directly to us by email to registration@lawsoc-ni.org. If your references are unavailable, please do not delay submitting your application for registration, as these can be supplied later.

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.

Evidence Required	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If available, you may upload scans of your two original references with your application. Each reference must be hand signed and dated. ○ If your referee is emailing their reference to us it should come from an official account and not a personal account such as Hotmail or Gmail.

Section 5: Evidence Upload

Please use this section to upload the evidence as outlined in this guidance. Please note the max file size is 3MB and in most instances only pdf, jpg, jpeg and png file types are permitted.

In addition, you should upload your completed copies of the following:

EF1B: Petition for Registration as a Student and Supplementary Declaration

The EF1B document comprises two separate forms, the Petition and the Supplementary Declaration.

The Petition is your formal oath that all information supplied as part of your registration form is true, as well as matters relating to character and fitness. Your Petition must be sworn before a [Commissioner for Oaths](#) (Art 76(1) Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, "*...every solicitor who holds a practising certificate which is in force shall have all the powers conferred by any enactment on a commissioner for oaths...*"). **It must not be sworn before your Master but may be sworn before another solicitor within your firm.**

The Supplementary Declaration is your formal declaration to the Society with respect to any cautions and/or convictions. It must be hand-signed and dated by you.

EF1E: Indentures of Apprenticeship ("training contract")

The Indentures of Apprenticeship ("training contract") is the legally binding agreement between yourself and your Master. **It does not need to be witnessed before a solicitor but it cannot be witnessed by a solicitor within your Master's organisation.**

Copies of your training contract should be kept by your Master and yourself for reference.

EF1Ei Code of Conduct

Your Master and you should review, sign and date the Code of Conduct.

Copies should be kept by your Master and yourself for reference.

EF1F: Confirmatory Note for Masters

You should supply this Note for your Master to complete.

Once complete it should be returned to you by your Master for uploading with your registration. It must be hand-signed and dated by your Master.

5. Regulation Summary

(a) Solicitors Admission and Training Regulations 1988 (as amended)

Registration with the Society is based on the relevant provisions, including:

- Regulation 8(1) and 8(2): requirement to have a law degree or other degree plus knowledge of the Core Subjects.
- *Regulation 9*: suitability to be accepted as a registered student.
- Regulation 10: requirement to serve apprenticeship.
- Regulation 12: payment of a wage.
- *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.”*

(b) 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.

6. Checklist

- ☐ Completion of the online application form for registration with the Society
- ☐ Uploaded clear scanned copy of your birth certificate (short or long form)
- ☐ Uploaded clear scanned copy of your name change documents (if applicable)
- ☐ Official certificates and transcripts of your relevant undergraduate and/or postgraduate qualifications (awarded and/or pending)
- ☐ Two references in support of your application – uploaded or to be supplied later via email
- ☐ EF1B Petition and Supplementary Declaration (completed, dated and sworn)
- ☐ EF1E Indentures of Apprenticeship (training contract) (completed, dated and witnessed)
- ☐ EF1Ei Code of Conduct (completed by you and your Master)
- ☐ EF1F Confirmatory Note for Masters (completed by your Master)
- ☐ Access NI Basic Check dated within last three months (share certificate using NI Direct via email to registration@lawsoc-ni.org)