



Law Society
of Northern Ireland

Admission Handbook: Qualified Reciprocal Solicitor



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About Us

The Law Society of Northern Ireland (“the Society”) was established in 1922 when a Royal Charter was granted to solicitors in Northern Ireland to permit the setting up of the Incorporated Law Society of Northern Ireland.

Today, the Society is the professional body for solicitors in Northern Ireland which, under the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (“the Order”), 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.

Any solicitor whose name is on the Roll of Solicitors in Northern Ireland (“the Roll) and who has not been suspended from practising as a solicitor may become a member of the Society. There are approximately 3,200 plus solicitors currently practising law in Northern Ireland.

Regulatory Framework & Governance

Regulation of solicitors in Northern Ireland is a statutory and delegated function conferred on the Society (principally) by the Order, as amended by the Solicitors' (NI) (Amendment) Order 1989.

By virtue of this primary legislation, and secondary regulations made there under, the Society through its governing Council is responsible for regulating professional standards, the propriety of solicitor's professional conduct in general and the handling of client's funds in particular, professional indemnity insurance and client compensation requirements, as well as the handling of complaints about solicitors made by their clients.

The Society operates through an elected Council of 30 members, all practising solicitors, who serve on a voluntary basis. The Council is guided by the Presidential and Chief Executive Team which consists of the President, Senior Vice President, Junior Vice President and Chief Executive.

Office of the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland (OLCJ)

In the exercise of its functions the Society is subject in various ways to the oversight and supervision of the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland (LCJ) The Right Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan.

Qualified Reciprocal Solicitor Route

Under the Qualified Reciprocal Solicitor (QRS) route, an individual qualified as a solicitor within a reciprocal jurisdiction is eligible to apply for direct admission to the Roll. The solicitor is not required to complete any additional studies or training.

The Society holds reciprocal arrangements with the following jurisdictions and their respective regulatory bodies:

- England and Wales - Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA); and
- Republic of Ireland - Law Society of Ireland (LSI)

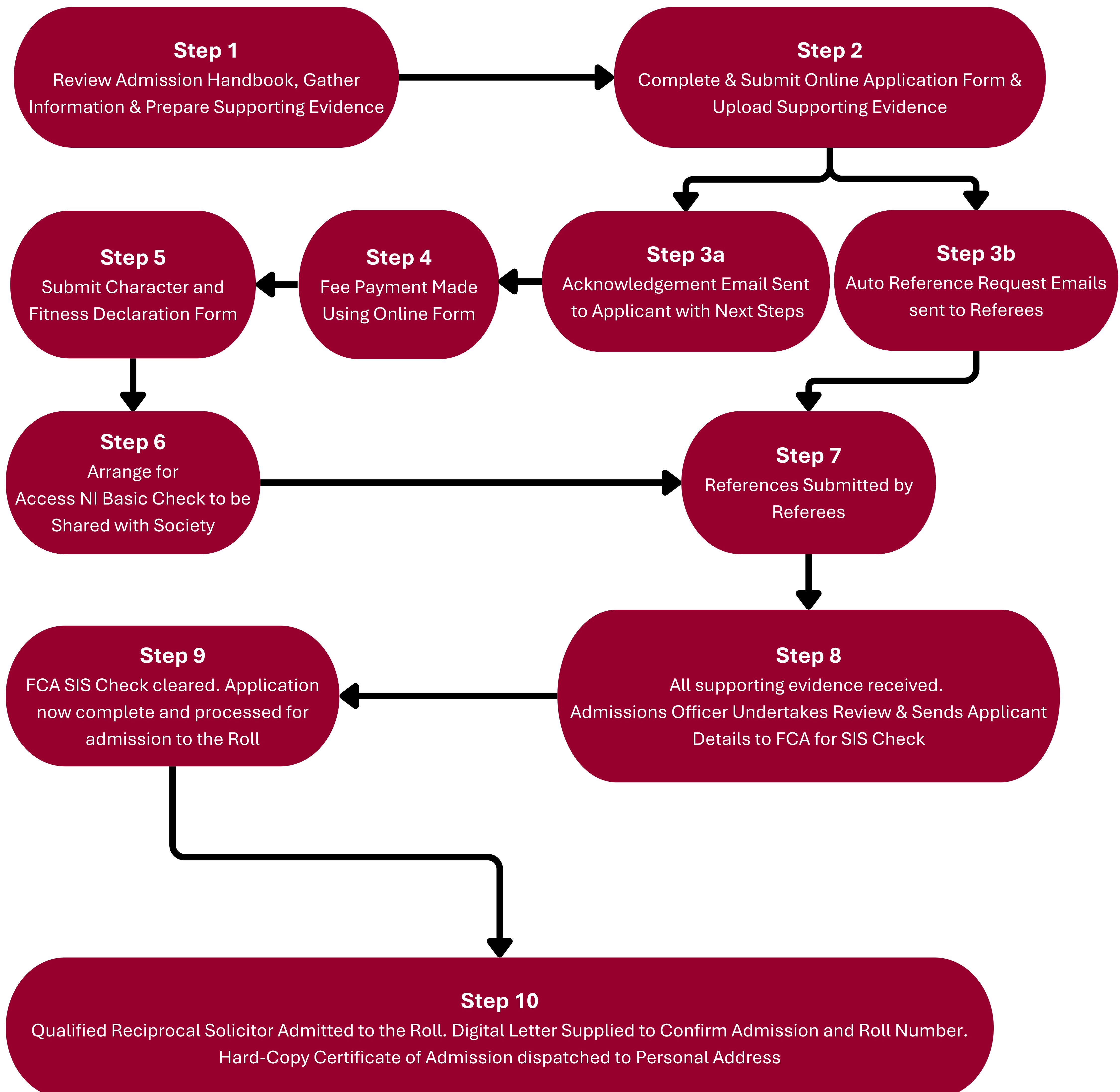
This arrangement is available to a solicitor who has at any point qualified as a solicitor within either/both of these jurisdictions, this includes individuals whose first place of admission was not a reciprocal jurisdiction.

A qualified reciprocal solicitor is not required to have practised in the reciprocal jurisdiction for a set period of time before being eligible to apply for admission to the Roll, but will be asked to confirm, via the online application form, their means of entry within that jurisdiction.

How to Apply for Admission

The process of applying for admission is completed entirely online. Please do not send any hard-copy paperwork to the Society unless expressly requested.

The below flow diagram outlines the process of applying for admission to the Roll for qualified reciprocal solicitors. This flow chart assumes no matters or declarations require Committee/Council consideration (see Regulations and Oversight p.13).



Preparing Your Supporting Evidence

Please note, you can save your progress when completing the online application form, but this will only hold your partial submission for 60 days before being deleted. It is important that you have all information and supporting evidence to hand before you commence.

All documentation and responses should be in English - for details on translations please see page 7.

Certificate of Good Standing

You must supply a certificate of good standing (COGS) from **ALL** regulatory bodies under which you have been admitted as a regulated legal professional, this includes as a solicitor, barrister, attorney-at-law or similar local title e.g. Advocat. This includes jurisdictions in which you no longer practise or have never actively practised.

The COGS should be dated within 3 months of the date of your application to be admitted to the Roll. If your COGS falls over the 3-month period whilst we await additional evidence, such as references, then a new document will be required. It is therefore recommended that you apply for admission to the Roll shortly after you receive this from your regulator.

If you have been admitted as a solicitor in England and Wales, you can find details of applying for your COGS via the SRA [here](#).

If you have been admitted as a solicitor in the Republic of Ireland, you can find details of applying for your COGS via the LSI [here](#).

You may also request that the regulatory body share this document directly with the Society at admissions@lawsoc-ni.org.

Certified Copy of Certificate of Admission

You must supply a certified copy of your admission certificate from **ALL** regulatory bodies under which you have been admitted as a regulated legal professional, this includes as a solicitor, barrister, attorney-at-law or similar local title e.g. Advocat. This includes jurisdictions in which you no longer practise or have never actively practised.

If you have a hard-copy of your admission certificate, you should take a photocopy and the original to a solicitor. They will then certify the copy, to include their name, signature and the date of certification. If they have a professional stamp, they should also stamp next to the certification. They must be a practising solicitor in NI, England and Wales or the Republic of Ireland. We will need to verify the certifying solicitor, so please ensure it is legible.

If you do not have or never received a hard-copy admission certificate (the SRA for example no longer issue hard-copy documents), please request that your regulatory body email a copy of your certificate directly to the Society at admissions@lawsoc-ni.org.

The SRA offer a replacement admission certificate service which can be sent to a third party. Please see [here](#) for details. Queries in respect to admissions paperwork for the Law Society of Ireland should be directed to the Admissions Executive, Philomena Whyte, by email P.Whyte@LawSociety.ie

Chronological Employment History

You must upload an up-to-date employment history document in chronological order. This may be a CV, but you should ensure that for each period of employment it includes:

- Dates of employment
- Employer name
- Jurisdiction (e.g. England and Wales)
- Role (e.g. Trainee, Associate, Barrister, Partner etc)
- Area/s of law practised (e.g. criminal, corporate, property etc)

Evidence of Name Change (if applicable)

If you have changed your name at any time, you should note this in the appropriate section on the online form. This will then trigger a requirement for you to upload a scanned copy of your name change documentation e.g. deed poll, marriage certificate or divorce decree.

Additional Notes

Size and Format

The maximum file size for uploaded documents is 3MB. The approved file types are PDF, JPEG, JPG and PNG. Please ensure your paperwork is correctly formatted before you commence the application.

Translations

If an original document is not in English, an official translation should also be provided. Translations must be completed by an individual or organisation who is a member of either:

- [The Chartered Institute of Linguists \(CIOL\)](#);
- [The Institute of Translation and Interpreting \(ITI\)](#); or
- [The Association of Translation Companies \(ATC\)](#)

Submitting Your Application

The online application form consists of 7 unique sections, as follows:

Section 1: Personal Details

- Title
- Full Name (including any middle names)
- Any previous names
You will be asked to upload name change evidence
- Date of birth
- Gender

Section 2: Contact Details

- Address including Postcode (if applicable, Eircode or Zip Code)
- Contact Telephone Number
- Email Address
Note, you will be asked to verify your email address before progressing.

Section 3: Admission History

You are required to supply details of ALL previous admissions as a legal professional, including as a barrister.

For each admission you will need to supply:

- Professional Title e.g. Solicitor, Barrister, Other
- Jurisdiction
- Regulatory Body
- Date of Admission
- Confirmation as to whether you are currently practising in this jurisdiction under this professional title

You will be able to include 4 admissions. Any additional admissions should be noted in the box provided. We will contact you to request further details.

Section 4: Employment and Intentions Upon Admission

Here you will be asked to supply your current employment details, including address. Additionally, you will be required to answer some questions as to your intentions of applying for admission to the Roll. If you have secured employment with an organisation in Northern Ireland, you should have their details to hand.

Section 5: Qualifying Legal Education

You will be asked to list all qualifying legal education completed in order to gain admission in your respective jurisdiction/s.

The format of this information is as follows:

- Qualification Title inc. Subject, Awarding Institution, Country, Month and Year of Award

For example:

- Bachelor of Laws (LLB) in Law with French, University of Birmingham, UK, June 2017

If you have completed any additional studies to gain admission, you should list these here. For example, the SQE or QLTT.

Section 6: Referees

You are required to supply details for two suitable referees. Each referee must meet the following requirements:

- Be a solicitor qualified in England and Wales, Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland
- Have a minimum of 5 years standing
- Have known you personally for at least 2 years
- Not be in a personal relationship with you
- Not be related to you, e.g. by birth, marriage, divorce, adoption or civil partnership

For each referee you will confirm their:

- Title
- Full Name
- Employer
- Professional Email Address

Each referee will be emailed upon submission of your application with a link to the reference portal. This will explain how to submit their reference and what information it should include as a minimum.

Section 7: Supporting Evidence

Here you will be asked to upload all supporting evidence in the boxes provided.

Next Steps

Once you have submitted your application for admission to the Roll, you will receive an acknowledgment email with your Applicant ID and details on the next steps, notably:

- Access NI Basic Check
- Fee payment
- Character and Fitness Declaration

Access NI Basic Check

You are required to complete and supply a [Basic Access NI](#) certificate. This should be dated within 3 months of the date of your application. You may wish to apply for this before you submit your application for admission. The cost is £16. For advice or assistance with an application please contact Access NI directly at 0300 200 7888 or ani@accessni.gov.uk.

Once you receive notification that your digital Access NI certificate is ready, please login to your NIDirect account and share this with admissions@lawsoc-ni.org.

Fee Payment

The fee for admission as a qualified reciprocal solicitor is £150.

Payment is made using the online card payment form supplied in the acknowledgment email. **We do not issue an invoice for this fee.** Upon payment the payee will receive an e-receipt. If applicable, you may use this receipt towards an expense claim with your employer.

The payee will be asked to input your Applicant ID in the form, so please share this with your employer if they are paying this on your behalf.

Character and Fitness Declaration

You will receive a link to the online Character and Fitness Declaration Form, further to the Society's Character and Fitness Policy (see page 13), in respect of:

- **Criminal Conduct**, for example if you have ever been arrested, charged, cautioned, or convicted of any criminal offence (including motoring offences, fixed penalties, or conditional cautions) in Northern Ireland or elsewhere.
- **Professional or Academic Misconduct**, for example if you have ever been the subject of any disciplinary proceedings, investigation, or sanction by a university, employer, or professional body (including the Law Society, Bar, or any regulator)

- **Financial Matters**, for example if you have ever been declared bankrupt, entered into an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA), been subject to a Debt Relief Order, or had a County Court Judgment (CCJ) or equivalent registered against you.
- **Civil, Regulatory, or Administrative Findings**, for example if you have ever been involved in civil proceedings involving allegations of fraud, dishonesty, negligence, or breach of fiduciary duty or if you have ever been subject to a finding, order, or sanction by a regulatory, administrative, or governmental authority (including immigration or tax penalties).
- **Health and Capacity**, for example if you have any physical or mental health condition or other circumstance which may affect your ability to undertake training or practise as a solicitor safely and effectively. If you wish to provide confidential supporting information under separate cover to the Professional Development Department you may do so by emailing niall.stirling@lawsoc-ni.org or calling 028 90 231 614 and asking to speak with the Admissions Officer.

For each of the above sections, if you are required to answer yes, then you will be provided with the opportunity on the form to supply further details.

Admission to the Roll

Upon receipt of your complete application, the Society's Admissions Officer will undertake a comprehensive review of your submission.

If you have made any declarations as part of your application or if any background checks raise any matters of concern, the Admissions Officer will contact you to discuss. Any matters of this nature would be put before the Education Committee for review and discussion. Please refer to the Regulations and Oversight section of this Handbook for details.

Provided that all is in order, the Admissions Officer will prepare and draft up a Certificate of Fitness and a Certificate of Admission. These will then be presented to the LCJ for review, approval and signing. On return to the Society, the paperwork is then countersigned by the Registrar of Solicitors. In the first instance, we will email you to confirm your admission. You will receive a digital letter confirming your date of admission and Roll number.

Certificate of Admission

The Certificate of Admission is the official document which serves as physical proof of your admission as a solicitor in Northern Ireland. This is a secure document with a number of integrated security features. It will be posted 1st Class and will need to be signed for. Please keep this document safe as we do not, at present, offer a replacement certificate service.

Admission Ceremony

The Society hosts an annual Admission Ceremony in Belfast to celebrate all solicitors admitted to the Roll in the preceding year. We will write to you in the Autumn time to ask you to save the date. At the Ceremony the LCJ, Registrar and Presidential team will join you and your guests in celebrating your achievement.



Regulations and Oversight

Admission to the Roll and subsequent practice as a solicitor in Northern Ireland is overseen by a number of regulations and policies.

Character and Fitness

All applicants seeking admission to the Roll must satisfy the Society that they are a fit and proper person. Further, Art 5(1)(b) of Order 1976 provides that a person:

may not be admitted as a Solicitor unless the Society is satisfied as to their character and fitness to be a Solicitor

As such, the Character and Fitness Policy outlines the approach the Society takes when considering a person's character and fitness to be a member of the solicitor profession in Northern Ireland. Responsibility for determining a person's character and fitness ultimately resides within the Society's Council (i.e. the governing body of the Society). In determining a person's character and fitness the Society will, in particular, have regard to the need to protect the public and also the public interest in maintaining trust and confidence in the solicitor profession.

You should refer to the Character and Fitness Policy [here](#) before making an application for admission.

Practising Certificate and Restrictions on Practice

Upon admission to the Roll, should you wish to practice reserved work as a solicitor in Northern Ireland, a Practising Certificate (PC) is required. You may only apply for a PC once you have been admitted and received your Roll number. Any queries in this regard should be sent by email to: practisingcertificate@lawsoc-ni.org.

All solicitors who are admitted to the Roll are required to serve a three-year period of restricted practice (three full Practising Certificates) under Reg 7(1) of the Solicitors Practice Regulations 1987 (as amended). This applies whether the individual trained in Northern Ireland or transferred from another jurisdiction.

During this period of restricted practice, a solicitor shall not engage in practice on their own account, whether in partnership or otherwise, and shall act as a solicitor only under the supervision of another solicitor who has held a practising certificate for the previous three years.

A solicitor may apply for a waiver of the period of restricted practice, as per Reg. 7(2)(a) of the said Regulations. This waiver request cannot be lodged pre-emptively and so can only be submitted after the individual has been admitted to the Roll.

Education Committee

The Education Committee deals with policy and practical matters arising out of the education, training and admission of solicitors in Northern Ireland and consists of up to fourteen members.

The Committee generally meets every five weeks with a break in the New Year.

In addition, the Committee under a Scheme of Delegation can consider a number of matters on behalf of Council - such as applications for waiver of the period of restricted practice and applications for admissions with additional matters.

Complaints and Appeals

Should you wish to make a complaint in respect to your application for admission or appeal a decision made by the Professional Development Department or the Education Committee, these should be made to the Appellate Committee c/o Mr Peter O'Brien, Deputy Chief Executive at peter.obrien@lawsoc-ni.org.

Data Protection and Privacy

The Society's Privacy Notices can be found [here](#).

Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
admission	means the process of being deemed and formally recorded as a recognised solicitor in Northern Ireland.
Certificate of Admission	means the official document produced by a regulatory body to confirm an individual's admission as a legal professional within a jurisdiction.
Certificate of Fitness	means the document produced by the Society confirming the standing of the applicant within their respective jurisdiction(s).
Certificate of Good Standing (COGS)	means an official document produced by a regulator to confirm the solicitor's (or other legal professional's) standing within the regulated jurisdiction in respect of conduct, suspensions or disciplinary proceedings. Some regulators may use a different term.
<i>the Committee</i>	means, in the context of this Handbook, the Education Committee of the Law Society of Northern Ireland.
<i>the Council</i>	means, in the context of this Handbook, the Council of the Law Society of Northern Ireland
FCA	means the Financial Conduct Authority.
LCJ	means the Lord or Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. Currently the Lady Chief Justice The Right Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan
LSI	means the Law Society of Ireland, the regulatory body for solicitors in the Republic of Ireland
OLCJ	means the Office of the Lord or Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.
<i>the Order</i>	means the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 .
Practising Certificate (PC)	means the formal document produced by a regulator, such as the Society, to confirm a solicitor's entitlement to practice within a jurisdiction.
Qualified Reciprocal Solicitor (QRS)	means an individual admitted as a solicitor within a reciprocal jurisdiction.
reciprocal jurisdiction	means a country, state or other area which the Society recognises and with which the Society holds specific arrangements allowing individuals admitted therein to apply directly to be a solicitor in Northern Ireland. Current reciprocal jurisdictions are England and Wales and the Republic of Ireland.
Registrar	means the Registrar of Solicitors for Northern Ireland, presently Mr David A Lavery CB.
<i>the Roll</i>	means the Roll of Solicitors in Northern Ireland. The official record of all individuals admitted as a solicitor in Northern Ireland.
Roll number	means the unique sequential number allocated to each newly admitted solicitor in Northern Ireland.
SIS	means Shared Intelligence Service.
<i>the Society</i>	means the Law Society of Northern Ireland, the professional body for solicitors in Northern Ireland.
SRA	means the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the regulatory body for solicitors in England and Wales.



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