



Professional Skills Course

Handbook 2015

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1. Course Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Professional Skills Course (PSC) is a course which must be completed satisfactorily by all trainee solicitors during their training contract in order to qualify as a solicitor.

The PSC consists of 3 compulsory core subject areas:

1. Client Care & Professional Standards
2. Advocacy & Communication Skills
3. Financial & Business Skills

In addition to the above trainees must complete 24 hours instruction of 'Electives'. 12 hours will be delivered on a face to face basis. The other 12 hours will be completed by way of distance learning by the trainees prior to attending the elective sessions.

1.2 Client Care & Professional Standards

This is a 2 day course which builds upon a trainee's knowledge gained from the Legal Practice Course (LPC).

Trainees should be able to identify and deal with issues concerning their ethical responsibilities to:

- Their clients
- The court
- Other solicitors
- Other professionals
- The Solicitors Regulation Authority and other relevant bodies
- Their colleagues

and

- Themselves

Upon completion of the course, they should be able to:

- Identify and understand the significance of client care, ethical and professional conduct issues and be able to respond in an appropriate way within the training context
- Apply appropriate professional standards
- Understand and apply business awareness
- Understand the need to work effectively with others
- Initiate and implement appropriate methods of personal work organisation and
- Appreciate the importance of and take responsibility for your own personal and professional development

The course is delivered by a practising solicitor and the materials provided for the course are wide ranging and highly practical with a clear focus on the key areas of client care and communication, professional standards and awareness and the practical issues surrounding work and case management.

The course sessions include:

- practical case scenarios
- role play
- practical exercises

These provide an excellent opportunity for the trainees to engage with the course and develop increased levels of professional awareness and communication skills. Trainees are expected to engage with the trainer and the rest of the group and a high level of input is expected.

1.3 Advocacy & Communication Skills

This is a 3 day course. Day one consists of half a day preparation for a civil mock trial and half a day preparation for a criminal mock trial. Trainees will be allocated roles for the trial during the preparation day.

The mock trials will take place on days 2 and 3. A day will be allocated to each trial.

Days 2 and 3 will take place in a Victorian court room at Sessions House in Usk. This will give trainees an excellent opportunity to practise their advocacy skills in a realistic court room setting.

The civil element of the course is delivered by a practising civil litigation solicitor who is also an experienced advocate.

The criminal element of the course is delivered by a practising criminal solicitor who is also an experienced criminal advocate.

The course raises challenging and interesting issues for trainees and will give them an opportunity to further develop their advocacy skills acquired during the LPC.

The course is assessed by way of a skills appraisal. Feedback will be given to all trainees immediately following the conclusion of the mock trial.



Photo courtesy of Sessions House, Usk

On completion of this area of the compulsory core, trainees should be able to exercise the rights of audience available on admission in the civil and criminal courts.

1.4 Financial & Business Skills

This is a 3 day course followed by a 1.5 hours open book exam. The exam will take place on a specified date after the conclusion of the 3 day course. The pass mark for the exam is 60%.

As a result of the course, trainees should:

- have developed improved financial awareness;
- be able to undertake exempt regulated activities under part XX FSMA; and

- be able to apply the rules of professional conduct relating to financial and accounting matters.

It is assumed that trainees will have gained the following knowledge as a result of having completed their LPC:

Solicitors' accounts and the SRA Accounts Rules 2011 (SAR). This will have included:

- the need to maintain separate office and client accounts
- the obligations regarding payment into and drawing from client account
- the need to record receipts and payments of office and client monies
- transfers between client accounts and between client and office accounts
- the obligation to prepare accounts in respect of clients' accounts
- the power of the Council to secure compliance with the SAR
- the processes involved in recording transactions for the purposes of paying of VAT
- the processes involved in recording abatements, bad debts and split money
- the processes involved in preparing a statement for clients on completion of a matter
- the need to pay interest to clients when appropriate
- the distinction between interest earned in general deposit and designated deposit accounts and preparation of accounts as appropriate
- the requirements in respect of the holding of trust monies.

The principles of accounting and an awareness of the need to interpret business accounts to ensure clients are appropriately advised. This will have included:

- an understanding of the need for accounts, the principles of bookkeeping, the terms used in accounts and basic accounting concepts and their uses
- an understanding of the processes involved in recording transactions, familiarity with books used to record transactions and an understanding of how accounting data is used to prepare trial balances and profit and loss accounts and a balance sheet
- an understanding of the need to make provision for depreciation and other year-end adjustments
- the ability to analyse and interpret entries in the balance sheet and profit and loss accounts of a sole trader, partnership and limited company
- an understanding of the nature of shareholders' funds and the need to account for taxation and the circumstances in which consolidated fund accounts are required

It may be useful for trainees to remind themselves of the above criteria prior to attending the course.

The course is split into six elements:

1. Element 1 – Accounting and financial issues
2. Element 2 – Introduction to the market place
3. Element 3 – The Regulatory Framework
4. Element 4 – The Scope Rules
5. Element 5 – Money Laundering
6. Element 6 – Mortgage Fraud

All of the above elements will be discussed in the three day course. However, only elements 2 – 6 are examinable and will be included in the exam.

The course itself is delivered by a qualified and practising accountant and provides a clear introduction to the main elements of the course all of which include excellent practical and topical information and references throughout.

The course provides opportunities for trainees to apply their newly acquired knowledge in practical case studies and includes 'revision' sections to aid in the preparation for the exam.

2. Booking & Payment Terms & Conditions

2.1 Payment of fees

Course fees must be paid 14 days before the first core or elective date, whichever is the sooner. If you fail to attend after booking the course then you remain liable for the fee subject to clause 6 below. Exam results and certificates of completion will not be issued until course fees have been paid in full.

2.2 Confirmation of booking

Confirmation of booking and details of venues will be sent by e-mail only to the e-mail address provided.

2.3 VAT invoice

A receipted VAT invoice will usually be issued to the delegate/organisation within 14 days of payment of the course fee.

2.4 Course documentation

Course documentation will be distributed at the event, subject to that required to complete the distance learning element of the electives.

2.5 Attendance registers

Attendance Registers must be personally signed on ALL days of attendance.

2.6 Variance, cancellation or postponement of course

We reserve the right to vary, cancel or postpone a course at short notice where necessary. Cpm21 accept no liability if the course does not take place. Refunds will be made as appropriate if the course is cancelled by us.

2.7 Postponement by delegate

You may postpone your attendance up to 14 days before the event, provided you e-mail such confirmation to support@cpm21.co.uk We cannot accept telephone, letter or faxed cancellations. Only one postponement is allowed.

2.8 Substitution of delegate

You may send a substitute delegate but the change must be agreed with cpm21 at least 14 days in advance of the first core or elective date, whichever is the sooner.

2.9 Data Protection

We may periodically contact you with updates. Information and details of courses and services. If you do not wish to receive such updates or information then please e-mail support@cpm21.co.uk

2.10 Presentations, materials and notes

The presentations, materials and notes for our courses are prepared solely for the benefit of the delegates attending that course. They are intended to be an integral part of the course presentation and do not necessarily stand on their own outside that context. They must not be used for giving advice in a specific situation. Neither cpm21 nor any of its consultants or tutors shall have any responsibility or liability for losses (including consequential loss) occurring because a person acts upon or fails to act based on any statement made by the consultant or tutor or contained in the course materials, notes or presentations. Our tutors are not authorised to provide practice management, legal or other advice relating to any specific situations or issue as part of our training courses and you should seek appropriate professional, financial or legal advice before making any decisions or taking any actions based on what you have heard, learned or read about on the course.

3. Finance Exam & Exam Board Arrangements

3.1 Attendance

All trainees must have attended the full 3 day Financial and Business Skills course to be eligible to sit the exam.

3.2 The Exam

The exam is a 1.5 hours open book exam. The pass mark is 60%.

3.3 Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners comprises the PSC Director (Wayne Williams), Financial and Business Skills tutor and the exam moderator (Noel Williams - Managing Partner at Kilsby Williams LLP). The papers will be marked by the course tutor and sample checked by the exam moderator. Once all papers are marked the results are sent to the PSC Director who will decide whether the board of examiners needs to meet to consider the results.

3.4 Results

Results will be made available within 6 weeks of the exam. Results will be issued in writing, either by email or first class post, if no email address is provided. For data protection reasons, results will not be made available by telephone. Please note that exam results will not be released unless all outstanding course fees have been paid in full.

3.5 Re-sits

It is possible to **re-sit** the exam. However, should a trainee fail the re-sit after two further attempts, they will need to retake the Financial and Business Skills course. The fee for re-sitting the exam is available upon request.

3.6 Extenuating Circumstances

If there are extenuating circumstances that result in a trainee failing the exam, that attempt at sitting the exam may be ignored. The student must notify cpm21 in advance or on the day

of the exam if there is any reason which will result in them being unable to perform to the best of their ability.

3.7 Appeals

A trainee may appeal their result within 14 days of receipt. To do this they must email the cpm21 course administrator, setting out the basis of their appeal. The exam board will convene within 28 days to consider the appeal. A written response will be sent to the trainee 14 days thereafter.

3.8 Reviews

The Board of Examiners will meet at least once every twelve months to review the exam paper and procedures.