



Law Society
of Scotland

Diploma in Professional Legal Practice

Guidance note for applicants 2022/23

The Diploma in Legal Practice (Diploma) is the postgraduate stage of the route to qualification as a solicitor in Scotland. This guidance is designed for students who are thinking about applying for the 2022/23 course. At the Law Society of Scotland, we encourage all prospective applicants to carefully consider their position before embarking upon the course, particularly in relation to funding arrangements and the traineeship job market.

This guidance note will cover:



Diploma providers

- Differences between providers
- Spaces per course and criteria for admission
- Course fees



Application process



Considerations before applying

- Diploma validity
- Funding and extra financial support for Diploma students
- The traineeship employment market
- Fitness and propeness
- Special considerations for international students



Diploma providers

In session 2022/23 there are six Diploma providers. Here's who they are and how many places they have available, both full-time and part time:

Provider	Full time places 2022/23	Part time places 2022/23
University of Aberdeen	96	N/A
University of Dundee		72
University of Edinburgh		140
University of Glasgow		204
Robert Gordon University	Flexible	Flexible
University of Strathclyde	150	15

We advise that students who are considering both full-time and part-time options speak directly to the Diploma providers of their choice, prior to completing the application form. There are significant differences between providers in terms of course structures, teaching timetables and fee schedules, so it's important to be absolutely clear on all of these factors beforehand.

Full-time courses take approximately one academic year, whereas part-time courses are usually spread over two academic years.

Competition and criteria for admission

In session 2021/22, demand from applicants exceeded the number of spaces available on the course, meaning unfortunately some applicants were unsuccessful in securing a place on the 2021/22 Diploma course. In 2021/22:



700 (approx) spaces on courses were available



1800 (approx) students applied for a place on the course

this figure may include duplicate applications therefore the exact figure could be slightly lower

For students on the LLB that started on or after 2011, admission to the Diploma is based on results in the subjects which map to the **foundation outcomes** required by the Law Society of Scotland.

If there is competition for places, Diploma providers will look at additional factors to determine how places are allocated. Explore the **Diploma section** of our website for more information.

Differences between providers

Each Diploma course has different structures, modules and electives and will vary in terms of your course options and timetables.

This year for the second time, applicants can apply to up to two Diploma providers. We really recommend taking the time to research different universities offering the Diploma before making your application.

Visit our Virtual Diploma Fair to compare the different providers in more detail.



Fees

The fees for the Diploma are set annually by each Diploma provider, not the Law Society of Scotland. These course fees and additional costs are set out below.

Each university has their own arrangement for the payment of fees. Visit our Virtual Diploma Fair or contact the universities directly to find out more about your options.

Diploma provider	Full-time fees
University of Aberdeen	TBC
University of Dundee	£8650
University of Edinburgh	£10200
University of Glasgow	£10000
Robert Gordon University	£7210
University of Strathclyde	£7700



Application process

When completing a Diploma application, you will be **entitled to apply to up to two Diploma providers**. This will give students a greater chance of securing a place on the Diploma and we advise using this opportunity to apply to two providers and not limiting your chances by applying to just one provider. As you are not guaranteed to be offered a place with the provider you choose, it's essential you consider alternative providers.

Application forms can be found on Diploma providers websites. You must complete only one application form and email it to the relevant Diploma providers that you are applying to, listing the Diploma providers by order of preference. **Please note that Diploma providers have discretion to take your preference into account when making offers.**

Please note, some Diploma providers will require you to also complete an online application form. Information can be found on the initial application. Strathclyde University, Glasgow University and Edinburgh University only require you to complete an online application form. See application form for more information.

For more information about the application process, search '**Applying for the Diploma**' on our website.

Application period for 2022/23 session

4 March: Applications for the Diploma open

6 May: Applications for the Diploma close

Acceptances must be made by **12 noon** on the relevant acceptance deadline below.

Round 1 offers

8 July: Deadline for Round 1 offers to be made to successful applicants

15 July: Deadline for acceptance of Round 1 offers

Should you receive more than one offer from one of your chosen Diploma providers, you must accept only one offer and decline the others. Failure to do so could result in your offers being withdrawn.

Round 2 offers

For applicants that have not been successful in Round 1, you will fall into the round two offers. Here, Diploma providers that have available space on their course may offer you a place.

25 July: Round 2 offers will be intimated to remaining applicants

29 July: Deadline for acceptance of Round 2 offers

Round 3 offers

For applicants that have not been successful in Round 2, you will fall into the round three offers. Here, Diploma providers that have available space on their course may offer you a place.

5 August: Round 3 offers will be intimated to remaining applicants

10 August: Deadline for acceptance of Round 3 offers

Please note that Diploma providers will set individual, bespoke deadlines for any subsequent rounds (e.g. Round Four onwards).



Considerations before applying

Diploma validity

The LLB does not have a period of validity, but the Diploma does. A valid Diploma is required in order for a trainee to commence a training contract.



The Diploma is valid for five years from 31 December the year it is awarded and you must start a traineeship before that date

e.g. if the Diploma is awarded in June 2023, it will be valid until 31 December 2028

As a prospective Diploma student, you are encouraged to consider Diploma validity alongside the fact that the traineeship market is very competitive. You may find you are still looking for a traineeship after graduating.

More information, including the standard application form, can be found by searching '**Diploma validity**' on our website.

Diploma validity is very important to consider at the moment with such uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and the effects we have already seen on the trainee job market which could continue for some time.

Funding and extra financial support for Diploma students

Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) loans

For the 2022/23 session, a loan entitlement of up to £10,000 for all full-time, Scottish domiciled postgraduate students is available from SAAS. For more information we encourage you to contact SAAS directly.



up to £5,500

Tuition fee loan

up to £4,500

Living cost loan (non-income assessed)

Our understanding is for both the tuition fee and living cost loan, repayment will commence once the student has graduated, is in employment and is earning above the student loan repayment threshold, currently at £25,000. Please visit www.saas.gov.uk for more information.

Additional sources of funding

In addition to SAAS funding, eligible postgraduates may be able to access additional sources of funding. These include:

- University Discretionary Funds
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- The Clark Foundation for Legal Education
- Local bursaries

Search '[funding your education](#)' on our website for more information about these funds.

The traineeship employment market

We encourage you to research and understand your position in the traineeship market before committing to the course. Traineeships are very competitive, and students are not guaranteed to be successful in securing a role.

Every year we produce trainee statistics so you can understand the broad picture. Here are some of the headlines from 2020/21:



An average of 89% of Diploma students secured a traineeship

Based on a five year average of our annual figures. This represents an increase from 85% last year.



744 traineeships commenced

this represents a 71% increase compared to 434 in 2019/20. However, many of these traineeships will have been deferred from 2019/20.



12% of traineeships were in-house

this shows a decrease from 17% from the previous year. However, due to the unusually large number of traineeships in 2020/21, in real terms, this was an increase of 19 traineeships (from 73 to 91)



252 traineeships started at firms with 1-5 partners

This is 21 more than the number at firms with 31+ partners

Standard training contracts by local authority

Geographical area	Practice Year					
	18-19	18-19 %	19-20	19-20 %	20-21	20-21 %
Edinburgh	240	41%	189	44%	252	34%
Glasgow	189	32%	132	30%	236	32%
Dundee¹	23	4%	17	4%	36	5%
Angus¹					1	<1%
Aberdeen²	44	7%	26	6%	31	4%
Aberdeenshire²					26	3%
Fife	11	2%	6	1%	29	4%
East Dunbartonshire³	10	2%	13	3%	2	<1%
Inverclyde³					1	<1%
Renfrewshire³					5	1%
West Dunbartonshire³					3	<1%
East Renfrewshire³					0	0%
Highland⁴					20	3%
Shetland⁴	2	<1%				
Na h-Eileanan Siar⁴	0	0%				
Orkney⁴	0	0%				
Midlothian⁵	6	1%	14	3%	26	3%
East Lothian⁵					0	0%
West Lothian⁵					8	1%
Perth and Kinross	11	2%	4	1%	10	1%
Falkirk	5	1%	3	1%	5	1%
Dumfries and Galloway	2	0%	2	0%	6	1%
Scottish Borders	9	2%	2	0%	8	1%
East Ayrshire⁶	7	1%	5	1%	7	1%
South Ayrshire⁶					7	1%
North Ayrshire⁶					1	<1%
North Lanarkshire⁷	12	2%	10	2%	8	1%
South Lanarkshire⁷					10	1%
Stirling	2	0%	2	0%	3	<1%
Argyll and Bute	0	0%	1	0%	2	<1%
England and Wales	0	0%	0	0%	2	<1%
Moray⁸	-	-	-	-	3	<1%
Clackmannanshire⁸	-	-	-	-	0	0%
Not applicable	-	-	-	-	1	<1%
	591	100%	434	100%	744	100%

1. Previously reported as "Dundee and Angus"
2. Previously reported as "Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire"
3. Previously reported as "Greater Glasgow"
4. Previously reported as "Highlands and Islands"
5. Previously reported as "The Lothians"
6. Previously reported as "Ayrshire"
7. Previously reported as "Lanarkshire"
8. Not previously individually reported



£19,500 is the recommended rate for 1st year trainee salaries

For 2nd year trainees, the recommended salary rises to £22,500.

As a minimum, all trainees must be paid at least the Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation.

Fitness and properness

A person cannot be admitted as a solicitor unless they are deemed to be a 'fit and proper person to be a solicitor'. Any person who practices as a solicitor in Scotland must be competent to do so and should not pose a risk to their clients, the public or other members of the profession.

Fitness and properness will be addressed for the first time when prospective trainees apply for an entrance certificate, which you must be granted to enter into a training contract. The Law Society will have regard to a number of factors including, but not limited to:

- Criminal convictions
- Bankruptcy/ Trust deeds
- Plagiarism

For more information, see the **fit and proper guidance** on our website. We advise that if you have any particular concerns, you get in touch with Martyn Robinson at the Law Society on 0131 476 8105 (martynrobinson@lawscot.org.uk) to discuss your circumstances.

Special considerations for international students

Overseas students studying with the intention of securing employment thereafter in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK are advised to make enquiries that they can satisfy any visa requirements.

The traineeship constitutes a period of work, rather than study, so students need to be aware of the change in their requirements prior to qualifying. For students that currently hold/ have held a Tier 4 visa for studying, when they undertake the traineeship and then work as a solicitor, they will need to apply for a Tier 2 visa.

If this affects you, please visit the **UK Government's website** for further information,



Need more advice or information?

Contact Emilia Berndes-Cade: EmiliaBerndes-Cade@lawscot.org.uk; or Visit our [Virtual Diploma Fair](#)