

Invitation by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority for Submissions on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) invites submissions as part of a consultation prior to a report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the admission policies of the legal professions.

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority was established on 1 October 2016 and is responsible for the regulation of the legal profession and ensuring that standards in legal services are maintained and improved.

Under section 33 (1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015, the LSRA is required to prepare and submit to the Minister an annual report on admission policies of the legal professions. For the purposes of preparing this report, the LSRA is required under section 33 (2) to conduct a consultation with professional bodies and such persons as it considers appropriate for the purpose of preparing the report.

The report will contain the following elements:

- (a) the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during 2019;
- (b) the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2019;
- (c) an assessment as to whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in 2019 is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.

The LSRA is interested to hear from those who are directly involved in the provision of legal services as well as from employers, state agencies, non-governmental bodies and other organisations and individuals who use the services of legal professionals.

The LSRA is interested in views on whether there are any potential developments which are external to the legal sector (e.g. economic, social or technological) which might impact on the availability of the services of solicitors and barristers at a reasonable cost.

Responses which provide insight into the experiences of other professions and jurisdictions would also be useful.

In considering any evidence presented, the LSRA will be guided by the regulatory objectives set down in section 13 of the Act, which are:

- (a) protecting and promoting the public interest,
- (b) supporting the proper and effective administration of justice,
- (c) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services,
- (d) promoting competition in the provision of legal services in the State,
- (e) encouraging an independent, strong and effective legal profession, and
- (f) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles of independence and integrity, acting in the client's best interests, compliance with duties owed to the court and confidentiality.

Following the consultation and other evidence gathering activities, the LSRA will draw up a report to the Minister of Justice and Equality.

The final report will be submitted to the Minister by 30 April 2020.

Scope of the Consultation

The Authority now invites written submissions in relation to the admission policies of the legal professions.

It would be helpful for any views expressed to be substantiated and, if necessary, supported with any available evidence.

Respondents are asked to indicate on whose behalf they are responding, for example as a member of the public, a public representative, an individual or a firm within the solicitor or barrister profession, a client or a body representing collective interests etc.

Interested parties wishing to contribute should send a written submission as soon as possible but in any event to be received no later than **3 February 2020**.

The Authority may contact respondents to explore any issues raised in responses in more depth and it will also be gathering evidence to use in its report from a variety of other sources.

Submissions may be sent:

- By e-mail to publicconsultations@lsra.ie or
- By post to
Section 33 Consultation
Legal Services Regulatory Authority

Freedom of Information

Attention is drawn to the fact that information provided to the Authority may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. Therefore, should it be considered that any information provided is commercially sensitive, please identify same, and specify the reason for its sensitivity. The Authority will consult with interested parties making submissions regarding information identified by them as sensitive before making a decision on any Freedom of Information request. Any personal information, which you volunteer to the Authority, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1998 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when commenced.

Publication of Submissions

The Authority intends where appropriate to publish any submissions received by it on its website and otherwise. Please note that a decision on any such publication may occur without prior consultation with respondents to this consultation notice. It is in the interest of respondents to highlight, in their submissions, any commercially sensitive or confidential information, which they would not wish to be disclosed.

Legal Services Regulatory Authority
19 December 2019