

# Southern Law Association

## Legal Services Regulatory Authority

### Section 33 Consultation on Admission Policies of Legal Professions.

The Southern Law Association is a representative association for Solicitors in Cork City and County (the SLA). It notes that the LSRA invites admissions on the Admission Policies of Legal Professions and makes submission to the LSRA on behalf of the members of the SLA and in respect in particular of the admission policies relating to the Solicitors profession.

A Solicitor occupies a critical role in the provision of Legal Services in Ireland, being in many cases the primary means by which the public can access such services. Consequently, the trustworthiness, reliability and integrity of those who practise as Solicitors, as well of course as their competence is critical.

Therefore, any system of admission to the profession must take such key attributes into account.

Indeed, these attributes may seem obvious, but it is critical that they are understood as being the cornerstone and bedrock of any decisions of how one might be admitted to the legal profession.

Any Admissions Policy must be robust enough to ensure that those admitted are possessed of these critical attributes.

In this regard it should be noted that solicitors handle a large amount of personal and often sensitive information for their clients and critical to their function is an appreciation of the importance of confidentiality and an interest in serving the interest of their client without fear or favour. Naturally a very high ethical standard is required as Solicitors are amongst the gate keepers in upholding and implementing the Rule of Law.

Additionally, of course Legal Practitioners acting as Solicitor must have a high level of competence in the provision of Legal Services. Society relies upon Solicitors to provide these services for the benefit of the Consumer, and if they do not have the education and training necessary to ensure that they are competent to provide such services, society cannot be well served.

Furthermore, a number of State Institutions such as the Revenue, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Justice, PRAI (to name just some) rely on Solicitors to provide key information to them (filing returns for Stamp Duty, CGT, provision of information in relation to the Estates of deceased to include a few) and their confidence in the ability of Solicitors to accurately provide that information is critical to the effective operation of these organs of the State.

Therefore, those seeking to be admitted to the legal profession, must be educated to a standard sufficiently high to enable them to be able to provide such services and it is in the interest of society as a whole that Solicitors have a high minimum standard and shared level of competency.



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Additionally, outside large urban areas and where a large number of legal services are accessed, clients need their Solicitors to be competent to provide them with advice in all of the key areas of their lives, Property, Probate, Litigation, Crime, Family, and while of course there may be complexed transactions for which specialisation is required, Society does need their Solicitors to be able to deal with these key areas.

Society will not be well served by Legal Practitioners having a one-dimensional view of Legal Services. Naturally specialisation has its place, but at an entry level all Legal Professionals require to have a broad understanding of the key areas of Legal Practise to fully inform their decision making,

Therefore, the system of entry and admission to the Solicitors branch of the Legal Profession needs to ensure that this is the case.

Dated the 11<sup>TH</sup> of February 2021



**JULI REA**

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