



Law Society
of Scotland

Diploma in Professional Legal Practice

Guidance note for applicants 2023/24

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 2023/24 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 2023/24 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 2023/24	Part time places 2023/24
University of Aberdeen	84	N/A
University of Dundee	68	4
University of Edinburgh	144 combined	
University of Glasgow	Approx. 200 combined	
Robert Gordon University	40 on campus, 40 online	Flexible
University of Strathclyde	c.156	c.16

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 2022/23, demand from applicants exceeded the number of spaces available on the course, meaning unfortunately some applicants were unsuccessful in securing a place on the 2022/23 Diploma course. In 2022/23:



700 (approx) spaces on courses were available



1,852 (approx) students applied for a place on the course

Admissions processes are set by the Diploma providers. For students on the LLB that started on or after 2011, the main criterion for admission to the Diploma is based on results in the subjects which map to the **foundation outcomes** required by the Law Society of Scotland.

Please note that Diploma providers have discretion to take into account additional factors to determine how places are allocated. Please contact [providers](#) for specific admissions queries.

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	Part-time fees
University of Aberdeen	£9400	N/A
University of Dundee	£8765	
University of Edinburgh	£10,735	£10,735*
University of Glasgow	£10,560	
Robert Gordon University	£7,930	£3,965
University of Strathclyde	£8,400	

*part-time fees are subject to an annual increase in year 2



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 apply separately to each Diploma provider (i.e you will make one or two separate applications). You may receive offers from either or both Diploma providers, regardless of preference. However, please note that Diploma providers will 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. See application form for more information.

For more information about the application process, visit the Diploma providers websites and search for the FAQ document.

Application period for 2023/24 session

3 March: Applications for the Diploma open

5 May: Applications for the Diploma close

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

Round 1 offers

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

14 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.

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

28 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.

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

9 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 2024, it will be valid until 31 December 2029

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 2023/24 session, a loan entitlement of up to £11,500 for all full-time, Scottish domiciled postgraduate students is available from SAAS. For more information we encourage you to contact SAAS directly.



up to £7,000

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 £25,375. 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 2021/22:



An average of 87% of Diploma students secured a traineeship

Based on a 3-year average of our annual figures. This represents an increase from 86% last year.



787 traineeships commenced

this represents a 6% increase compared to 744 in 2020/21.



10% of traineeships were in-house

this shows a decrease from 12% from the previous year. In real terms, it was a drop of 17 in-house traineeships (92 to 75).



36% of traineeships started at firms with 1-5 partners

With 32% commenced at firms with 31+ partners

Training contracts commenced in 2021/22 by geographical area

Local authority area	Training contracts
Glasgow	270
Edinburgh	254
Aberdeen	52
Dundee	36
Midlothian	22
Highland	18
Fife	13
Perth and Kinross	13
Renfrewshire	13
West Lothian	9
North Lanarkshire	8
South Ayrshire	8
South Lanarkshire	8
East Ayrshire	6
Aberdeenshire	6
Scottish Borders	6
Dumfries and Galloway	5
Moray	5
North Ayrshire	4
Stirling	3
Inverclyde	3
East Dunbartonshire	2
West Dunbartonshire	2
East Lothian	1
England and Wales	1
Falkirk	1
Angus	0
Argyll and Bute	0
Clackmannanshire	0
East Renfrewshire	0
Orkney	0
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0
Shetland	0



£20,500 is the recommended rate for 1st year trainee salaries

For 2nd year trainees, the recommended salary rises to £23,750.

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 Louise Bradley at the Law Society on 0131 476 8105 (louisebradley@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](#)