



OIFIG AN PHRÍOMH-ATURNAE STÁIT  
CHIEF STATE SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

09 February 2024

Section 33 Consultation  
Legal Services Regulatory Authority  
PO Box 12906  
Dublin 7

Your Ref:

Our Ref: 2024/00181

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**By email only – [publicconsultations@lsra.ie](mailto:publicconsultations@lsra.ie)**

**Re: LSRA Consultation on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions in 2023**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission as part of the above consultation. We note that submissions are particularly sought by the Authority on the following four issues:

- 1. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2023.*
- 2. The costs of legal services in 2023 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.*
- 3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.*
- 4. The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.*

As the Chief State Solicitor's Office comprises solicitors who work in the full time service of the State, we do not experience consumer demand or charge legal costs to consumers in the same way as a private practice would do. Accordingly, the aspect of the consultation on which we have chosen to focus is point 3 above and we set out our thoughts below. We are interpreting the question as relating to the standard of education and training for solicitors *post* admission.

In the CSSO, we are committed to a culture of ongoing learning for our solicitors. Our Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2026 provides that the CSSO takes pride in providing legal services of the highest standard to our clients and is committed to supporting the continuing professional development of our people in order to maintain this standard. The high pace of development and reform in long standing areas of law, together with the emergence of new

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and evolving areas of law means that in order for our solicitors to do their job effectively and to the highest standard, the standard of available education and training is critically important to us.

Against that backdrop, I am pleased to confirm our view that there is a high standard of education and training available for practising solicitors. Together with CPD lectures, 'masterclass' sessions and subject specific conferences and seminars, each year a number of our staff take on a substantive professional qualification, typically with either the Law Society of Ireland or the Honourable Society of King's Inns. Diplomas on topics such as Environmental & Planning Law, Public Procurement Law, Data Protection Law, Employment Law, Commercial Property and Immigration & Asylum Law are particularly popular with our solicitors and have a readily applicable value to our practice. As the legal landscape becomes more specialised and increasingly complex, we find that these formal qualifications are a necessary supplement to the standard legal education to allow solicitors to continually develop as legal practitioners.

The feedback from solicitors undertaking these courses as to the standards has been extremely positive. We have noted below consistent feedback which was provided across the courses:

- The standard of both the lectures and the material provided was excellent.
- The lecturers were all highly competent and proficient in their areas of practice. There were lectures and papers by a number of judges from each jurisdiction, practising solicitors, senior counsel and mediators who provided great practical insights and were very willing to answer questions and give practical examples.
- There was a welcome mix between the academic and the practical. For example, in-person practical group workshops followed by individual written assignments.
- The delivery of live online lectures outside office hours which are also recorded works very well and enables students to listen back and revise for the given assignment/exam.
- An online "Discussion Forum" is also very useful as it allows students to share knowledge or pose questions on any given matter relevant to the course. This proved very helpful with insightful feedback on queries provided by both students and lecturers.
- The written notes were comprehensive and have proved a very useful reference point on difficult client matters after conclusion of the diploma.

We trust that this feedback as to educational standards is of use to the Authority in its consultation.

We would also offer one suggestion in respect of education and training which does not concern standards but rather course design and focus. Much of the substantive post-qualification accredited certificates or diplomas available to solicitors focus on net, specialised areas of practice (such as those diplomas referred to above). As mentioned above, this is very important so that practitioners remain current in their expertise. However, it strikes us that there may also be benefits to broader refresher type courses on very

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general topics such as civil litigation / advanced dispute resolution or commercial law / corporate transactions to cover advances and changes in these areas and to support solicitors who may, for example, be moving from a transactional practice into a litigation practice without having run litigation files in a number of years or vice versa.

We wish the Authority well in its consultation process.

Yours faithfully



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**MARIA BROWNE**  
**CHIEF STATE SOLICITOR**

*Communications with Maria Browne as a Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 may require you to register under the Regulation of Lobbying Act. See [www.lobbying.ie](http://www.lobbying.ie) for further detail.*

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