

VOLUNTARY CODE OF RECRUITMENT FOR TRAINEE SOLICITORS

This Code has been created as a recommended standard of good practice for employers, students and Higher Education Careers Advisers and Faculty staff for the recruitment of trainee solicitors.

The signatories to the code are:

- **The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)** is the professional body for careers and employability professionals working with higher education students and graduates and prospective entrants to higher education.
- **The Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)** is an employer-led membership organisation, whose goal it is to ensure that all its members can recruit and develop the best student talent for their needs and the needs of the UK economy.
- **The Junior Lawyers Division (JLD)** is the division of the Law Society which represents LPC students, LPC graduates, trainee solicitors, and solicitors up to five years qualified across England and Wales. With approximately 75,000 members, it is one of the largest communities within the Law Society.
- **The Law Society of England and Wales** is the independent professional body for solicitors, supporting and representing over 133,000 solicitors practising in England and Wales.

Embarking on a training contract (*) is a critical step in a solicitor's career. This Code allows law and non-law degree students sufficient time to make considered career decisions before committing to this career path and to a particular employer. In doing so, the Code aims to promote diversity and best practice in recruitment in the profession from the entry level.

The code also recognises the business needs of employers when candidates are interviewed and offered training contracts. Firms that participate in the Code shall expect that student applicants will abide by it in return. Compliant firms are free to advertise their participation in the Code.

Obligations on Employers

This Code applies to all applicants whether or not they have undertaken/are undertaking a vacation placement with the employer and whether they are law degree or non-law degree students.

Equality and Diversity

Employers shall give due regard to equality, diversity and social mobility in their recruitment practices with particular reference to the Equality Act 2010.

Application Deadlines

The opening date for training contract applications shall be no earlier than during the penultimate year of an applicant's undergraduate study.

Employers shall give due consideration to the academic calendar and set an appropriate deadline date for training contract applications. Employers will respond to all applicants regardless of outcome.

Interviews

At interview, applicants will be told if there are any further stages to the selection process and when these will take place.

Training Contract Offers

Employers may make training contract offers to individuals at any time after applications open, but the offer shall not expire before 15 September in the applicant's final year of undergraduate study, or 4 weeks from the date the offer is made (whichever is later).

Students applying in their final year of study or who have already graduated may be made an offer at any time and will have four weeks to respond unless the required start date is earlier than four weeks. An offer will not be withdrawn before the time limit for acceptance has expired. Students shall have the option to accept or reject the offer from the date the offer is made, but shall not be pressurized or penalized for waiting until the expiry date of the offer.

Extension of Time

Employers will give consideration to an applicant's request for an extension to the time limit on an offer, and may grant such an extension provided that a good reason is given.

Financial Assistance for Undergraduate or Postgraduate Studies

Where an employer is prepared to provide financial assistance to a student in relation to undergraduate or postgraduate studies, the terms and conditions on which the assistance is offered will be explained in writing when the training contract offer is made. Any time limit for the acceptance of an offer of financial assistance must not have the effect of reducing the time limit for accepting the training contract offer.

Obligations on Students

Informing Firms When You Cannot Attend a Training Contract Interview / Vacation Scheme

In the event that a student knows in advance that they cannot attend a training contract interview or vacation scheme, they should make every effort to inform the firm in a timely fashion. This should be a minimum of 48 hours notice.

Responding to Offers

Students should carefully and seriously consider any offers of employment as a trainee solicitor and be aware that they will not be penalized for waiting until the expiry date of the offer. Students should accept offers in writing within the time frame stipulated above.

After Accepting an Offer

Once a student has accepted an offer, the student must inform all other employers who have made a training contract or vacation scheme offer, or invited them to attend an interview, that they have accepted a training contract offer elsewhere and as such are withdrawing from the recruitment process. Furthermore the student will make no further applications for a training contract or vacation scheme.

Note

(*) The words "Training Contract" have been used throughout this document in recognition that this is still the commonly used and understood terminology for what is officially now known as the "Period of Recognised Training"