



Law Society of Ireland Access Programme

Terms and Conditions



Background

The Law Society Access Scholarship Programme has been operating successfully since September 2001. The programme aims to assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to gain access to professional legal education. It is contributing to the creation of a broader spectrum of solicitors, which is vital in promoting a legal profession that reflects the diversity of the society it serves.

What is on offer?

The Programme offers reduced or waived exam and course fees as well as maintenance funding from the FE-1 exams stage through to the completion of the Professional Practice Courses (PPC)¹.

Once accepted onto the Programme, students may be eligible for a fee waiver on exam fees for four Final Examination – First Part (FE-1) exam sittings (students can register to sit up to eight FE-1s at each sitting).

Please be advised that there is a cap on Access student numbers for each FE-1 sitting and PPC I course. Should the maximum be reached, students may be required to wait until the next FE-1 sitting or PPC I course as applicable.

Application Process

1. Applicants are required to complete a detailed application form available online from the Law Society of Ireland's website (<http://www.lawsociety.ie>) or from the Access Programme, Law School, Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place, Dublin 7 (access@lawsociety.ie).
2. Applicants are interviewed by the Access Programme of the Law Society of Ireland.
3. Final decision regarding eligibility is determined by an Access Scholarship Programme sub-committee.
4. Places are allocated according to budget and a waiting list may apply.

Eligibility

Applications are considered from candidates who have completed degree programmes, with the support of an Access Programme, in one of the following higher education institutes:

- University of Limerick.
- Dublin City University.
- Institutes of Technology.
- National University of Ireland, University College Cork.
- National University of Ireland, Galway.
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth.
- University of Dublin, Trinity College.
- University College Dublin.

In *very exceptional* circumstances, candidates who can demonstrate that they meet equivalent socio-economic criteria but did not participate in a third level access programme may be considered. Priority however will be given to those who did participate in a third level access programme.

¹ Exam(s) re-check fees and PPC exam(s) re-sit fees are not covered by the Access Programme.

All candidates will need to have completed formal legal education and/or relevant third level qualification prior to application to the Access Programme. Graduates of disciplines other than Law (e.g. History, English, etc.) and Law graduates from other jurisdictions are required to have completed a minimum of a Diploma in Irish Law which covers the eight subjects examined in the FE-1 exams before they can be assessed for the Access Scholarship Programme. This is to ensure that students are adequately prepared for those exams.

Fee Waivers & Financial Support²

Final Examinations – First Part (FE-1s)

- Minor funding may be provided to assist with some of the costs that are directly related to undertaking FE-1s.
 - Students may receive financial assistance /be exempted from FE-1 exam fees up to a maximum of four sittings (ranging from four to eight exams at any one time). This applies to exams taken within a two - year period of joining the Access Programme. Any extension to this timescale will require a review of the student's financial circumstances and a re-assessment of the student's eligibility for the Programme. Students should apply to the FE-1 Section to take FE-1 exams (see <https://www.lawsociety.ie/Public/Become-a-Solicitor/FE-1-Exam/> for the application form).
- Should a student receive maintenance funding and not sit FE-1 exams, the Law Society may require reimbursement.
- Should a student register for FE-1 exams and not sit them, the Law Society may request to be reimbursed - unless there are certified medical grounds for not sitting the exams. Failure to formally notify your intention to be absent or your reasons for absence to the Access programme or the FE-1 Section will result in that sitting being counted as one of the four fee-waived sittings.
- Receipts must be submitted in respect of all travel and accommodation expenses being claimed.
- Funds are at the discretion of the Law Society of Ireland and may vary depending on applicant's personal circumstances.

Professional Practice Course (PPC I & PPC II) Fees and Maintenance

- All Access PPC applicants are required to apply to the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) for grant aid prior to the commencement of each PPC course and provide written clarification from SUSI on the status of the application when registering for each course. The Access Scholarship Programme usually covers the portion of fees not met by SUSI. Disclosure of Access status is required when registering for the PPC I course.
- Non-application or ineligibility for grant-aid may result in students becoming liable for full PPC fees.
- Minor funding may be awarded to assist with maintenance costs that are directly related to undertaking the Professional Practice Courses (PPC). Funds are at the discretion of the Law Society of Ireland and may vary depending on applicant's personal circumstances.
- For further information on PPC I and PPC II course fees and funding on the PPC please visit the following area on the Law Society website:
<http://www.lawsociety.ie/Trainees/PPC-Courses/Fees--Funding/>.

² Exam(s) re-check fees and PPC exam(s) re-sit fees are not covered by the Access Programme.

Admission to the Roll of Solicitors

- The fee for admission to the Roll of Solicitors is waived for Law Society Access Scholarship students.

Other Resources

Assistance with procuring a training contract

There are a number of practical ways in which the Law School assists Access students to approach securing a traineeship competently and confidently:

Seminars

Free places are offered to all Access FE-1 students to attend the annual '**How to Find a Training Contract**' seminar. Inputs are delivered by the Law Society's Training Executive, Career Guidance Executive and experienced lawyers in practice.

Mentoring

Appointments are available with Antoinette Moriarty (access@lawsociety.ie) at all stages of the Access Programme to help build confidence and communication skills. These can be an important source of support for students who may feel quite isolated from family or community as a result of their chosen career path.

One-to-one appointments are available with the Law Society's Training Executive focusing on CV advice and career guidance. Once Access students commence their period of in-office training, a supportive visit from the Training Executive can be arranged.

Peer Support

Students may occasionally be put in direct contact with other Access students or qualified solicitors who participated in the Access Scholarship Programme.

Materials

FE-1 Books

Access students may borrow books and selected legislation from the FE-1 Syllabus reading lists, for each subject, from the Law Society Library. Long-term loans of books from the recommended reading lists - which are the core texts - will be confined to one text per subject. Short-term loans of core texts and of books on the supplemental reading lists can be arranged with library staff. Contact the library directly (libraryenquire@lawsociety.ie) to borrow books/ legislation.

FE-1 book lists are available on-line from:

<http://www.lawsociety.ie/Pages/Public-Becoming-a-Solicitor-CMS/Irish-Applicants-Solicitor/FE-1-Exam/>.

FE-1 Examination Papers/Examiners Reports

FE-1 exam papers and examiners' reports extending back over a period of five years are available free of charge to Access students, from the Law School Reception desk (lawschool@lawsociety.ie). Additional Exam papers/reports may be purchased if required.