



Police Station Representatives Accreditation Scheme (PSRAS) Overview

This scheme deals with the accreditation of those representatives who advise suspects at the police station. Most firms of solicitors who undertake criminal legal aid work use accredited representatives to advise and assist clients at police stations. In order to claim remuneration from the Legal Aid Fund, the representative must be accredited or be registered with the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) as a probationary representative. The LAA is responsible for administering the Legal Aid Fund.

The scheme tests the representative's knowledge and understanding of criminal law and procedure, the common crimes and the rules of evidence. The scheme also tests the representative's understanding of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and the Codes of Practice under PACE. A probationary representative must also exhibit knowledge of the role of defending the client in the police station. Skills are also tested as, to be an effective adviser, the representative should be able to communicate, negotiate, interview and advise successfully. The [standards of competence](#) set out all areas of knowledge and skills.

There are three assessment elements under the scheme. All three must be successfully completed before accreditation. These are the written examination, the portfolio of cases and the Critical Incidents Test (CIT). Some people are exempt from sitting the written examination.

An individual can remain registered with the LAA for up to one year as a probationary representative. Within six months of registration with the LAA, one assessment element must be passed. All assessment elements must be passed within one year of registration with the LAA. Failure to achieve this results in the representative being suspended by the LAA from undertaking legally aided work at the police station.

PSRAS Elements

Assessment elements

Written examination

Prior to registration with the Legal Aid Agency (LAA), candidates must pass the written examination. For this reason, we advise candidates to pass the written examination before submitting Part A of the portfolio. The reason for this is that cases in Part A cannot be older than three months at the time of submission.

The written examination is presently an online proctored assessment. It is an open book examination in that candidates can refer to two texts during the examination for reference purposes. The examination assesses the candidate's understanding of the role of the police station adviser, together with the skills necessary to fulfil this role and knowledge of criminal law and procedure.

Candidates may be exempt from this requirement: if they have passed the Legal Practice Course (LPC) or Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) or its predecessor or are Fellows or Members of the Institute of Legal Executives who have passed ILEX level 6 professional Higher Diploma in Law (previously called the part 2 examinations) which must include the criminal law and criminal litigation examinations. Candidates must provide us with proof of the above to gain the benefit of the exemption.

We hold examinations throughout the year. The timetable shows the dates on which the examinations are held.

We offer two training courses to prepare you for the examination. These are held at regular intervals during the year. The timetable provides the dates of these training courses.

Portfolio

All candidates must complete and submit a portfolio of cases involving attendance at a police station for interview.

The portfolio of cases is submitted in two parts. Part A comprises four cases: detailed reports of two cases where the candidate has observed his/her supervising solicitor advising a suspect at the police station, followed by detailed reports of two cases where the candidate has been observed by his/her supervising solicitor giving advice to suspects at the police station. These cases must be in chronological order (with the two where the candidate observes coming first) and less than three months old. Part A of a portfolio may be submitted at any time. Our timetable shows the latest date for submission of Part B to ensure assessment by the next shown results date.

Submission of Part A of the portfolio to us allows the candidate to apply to the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) for a PIN, as long as they also are either exempt from the written exam or hold a pass in it. Part A will not be assessed at this time, but if it is technically compliant, we will issue an application form to the representative which the candidate forwards to the LAA. The PIN issued by the LAA is essential to undertake further probationary work whilst not directly supervised. At this point the candidate becomes a probationary representative.

The probationary representative then prepares and submits to us Part B of the portfolio. This comprises detailed reports of a further five cases where the representative has advised at the police station alone. At this stage, the complete portfolio (Part A and Part B) is assessed as a single submission. It should therefore have cases numbered 1-9 and be paginated as a single document.

The regulations and guidance in relation to portfolios are complicated. We will issue further information upon receipt of a registration form. We only accept submission of the portfolio electronically via Fastfile. We will provide you with instructions for this.

If your portfolio is not successful, you will receive full feedback and guidance to assist you in preparing your re-submission.

We offer a training course to assist you in preparing your portfolio. These sessions are held at regular intervals during the year. The timetable provides the dates of these training courses.

Probationary representatives must pass the portfolio or CIT element within six months of the PIN being issued, and must pass both elements within twelve months of its issue. Failure to do so will result in suspension from the register.

Critical Incidents Test (CIT)

All candidates must undertake the Critical Incidents Test. This test can only be taken by probationary representatives holding a PIN issued by the LAA. Probationary representatives must pass either the portfolio element or CIT element within six months of the PIN being issued and must pass both elements within twelve months. Failure to do so will result in suspension from the LAA register of probationary representatives.

This assessment is a live role-play test. The test aims to recreate a police station attendance by the use of audio recordings to provide information. The candidate can intervene during set pauses to respond to the information the candidate has received, to request further information or to advise. The whole of the test is recorded for assessment purposes. The test is conducted on an individual basis and lasts a maximum of 45 minutes.

This test assesses whether the candidate's responses are appropriate, with reference to police station practice and procedure. The test also allows for the candidate's skills to be assessed e.g. communication, negotiation and assertiveness.

CIT assessments are held at regular intervals during the year. The timetable provides the dates.

If you do not succeed in the CIT assessment, you will receive full feedback and guidance to assist you in improving your performance at your re-assessment.

We offer a training course to assist you in preparing for this unusual test. These courses are held at regular intervals during the year. The timetable will provide you with the dates of these training sessions.

PSRAS Training

We offer several training courses to assist you in gaining accreditation as a Police Station Representative. All of our courses are accredited by the Solicitors Regulation Authority as qualifying for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

An Introduction to Criminal Law - 6 hours CPD - Course Code PSRAS T2(a)

This is an introductory course for those who have little or no knowledge of Criminal Law. This course is suitable for the complete novice or for those who have worked in the criminal justice system but want to learn law from a different perspective. It could also act as a useful refresher course for those with some knowledge. It is, however, a fundamental law training course which will cover basic criminal law concepts with particular reference to the needs of the professional adviser in the police station. There will, therefore, be reference to PACE and police station practice and procedure throughout the course. It is primarily designed as a course to complement the Examination Training course.

Examination training - 6 hours CPD - Course Code PSRAS T2(b)

This course is intended to prepare candidates for the written examination. Candidates attending this course will find it useful to have a basic level of knowledge of criminal law and procedure and particularly police station practice. We recommend those who have little experience attend our Introduction to Criminal Law course prior to undertaking this course.

This course provides practical advice in relation to examination techniques and approaches. It also provides useful information about the structure of the examination and the relevant regulations. Practice questions are provided and there is also the opportunity to undertake a "mock" examination under examination

conditions. The nature of the course means that substantive criminal law and police station practice and procedure are addressed during the course.

Portfolio training - 3 hours CPD - Course Code PSRAS T1

This course is designed to assist you in the preparation of your portfolio of cases. By the end of the course you will be familiar with the PSRAS regulations in relation to portfolios, including the requirements to ensure that your portfolio is technically compliant. You will be given guidance to ensure that the format and content of your portfolio is satisfactory. This course also gives you the opportunity to consider a number of sample cases and receive advice on the strengths and weaknesses of each case's presentation and substance. Please note that this course also deals with the preparation of portfolios by solicitors seeking to attain the Police Station Qualification.

Critical Incidents Test training - 3 hours CPD - Course Code PSRAS T3

This course aims to prepare you for the Critical Incidents Test (CIT). The unusual nature of the CIT assessment makes this course particularly helpful. It addresses the style of the test itself and the marking scheme. It will provide guidance on how to avoid making common mistakes. You will have the opportunity to undertake some parts of a CIT in small online groups with other probationary representatives and solicitors. The make-up of this course prompts discussion of police station practice and procedure and can assist you in improving your police station skills and technique generally.

Venues

All training and assessment is undertaken online presently. Our training is a mixture of online materials that you undertake alone and live interactive online sessions. We will reintroduce some face to face training courses when it is safe to do so.