



## GUIDANCE NOTE FOR STUDENTS: PEAT 1 / THE DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL LEGAL PRACTICE

In September 2011, Professional Education and Training Stage 1 (PEAT 1) will be introduced, which is the postgraduate stage of the route to qualification as a solicitor in Scotland. Please read this guidance note on PEAT 1 (also known as the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice) carefully in considering whether to apply for a place in session 2011/2012. In particular please note the position in relation to:

- the availability of SAAS funding
- the future of funded places in Scotland
- the new format of the PEAT 1 course and the differences between providers

### ACADEMIC SESSION 2010/2011 – DIPLOMA PLACES, SAAS FUNDING AND TRAINEESHIP INFORMATION

To understand the position in relation to the forthcoming academic session, you should note some statistics in relation to academic session 2010/2011:

- For the second year, and in a change from previous years, the number of places available at Diploma providers exceeded the final demand for places: there were 824 applications for 902 places, and 695 students ultimately took up places at the start of the Diploma year with 655 students currently on the course.
- Costs across Diploma providers ranged from £4,200 to £5,750, plus material costs of between about £300 and £600 (depending on the package of materials offered). **Please note for academic session 2011/2012 the fees are expected to range from £5,220 up to £6,500 with some providers including materials in their fee and others charging separately between £330 and £400. Please contact the PEAT 1 providers directly for more information on the fees.**
- Of 695 students who commenced the Diploma, 300 received SAAS fee awards of £3,400. These were distributed amongst the Diploma providers on the basis of a proportion of the 300 to each provider based on the number of students they planned to take in the 10/11 year. At each university, the awards were distributed to the best performing applicants in the Professional Subjects required by the Law Society. Funding to the 300 best performers was partial funding and did not cover full course costs.
- 395 students who commenced the Diploma in Legal Practice were self-funders (57%).
- **In 2010 the number of traineeships registered with the Society was 539, an increase from 427 in 2009. Students should view this increase with some caution as it may in part be down to deferred or postponed traineeships prior to 2010 and students without traineeships remain in a competitive market as a result of the economic downturn.**

### PART TIME DIPLOMA OPTIONS

- In academic session 2011/2012 Strathclyde University, in association with Central Law Training (Scotland) Limited is to offer a part-time PEAT 1 (Diploma in Professional Legal Practice). The course is to run in parallel with Strathclyde's one-year full-time PEAT 1 course.
- The University of Edinburgh will continue to offer a part-time provision for PEAT 1 in 2011/12.

Please note there are no funded places available for the part time PEAT 1 courses.

### CHANGES TO SAAS FUNDING: SESSION 2011/2012

In late 2008, the Scottish Government announced to the Society its plans to change the student support arrangements for the Diploma in Legal Practice. Historically, 300 SAAS funded places attached themselves to applicants to the Diploma, being outgoing students of the ten LLB providing universities and those who had

completed the Pre-Diploma Training Contract through the Society. These funded places attached on a proportional basis (across those undergraduate institutions and the Society) based on performance in the Professional Subjects. The review of the student support arrangements in the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice is part of a much wider review of a particular category of post-graduate student support in Scotland, Post-graduate Student Allowance Scheme (PSAS) funding, and the details were outlined in the guidance note the Society distributed with the application forms for the Diploma in Legal Practice last year. However, please note, due to several factors, the timings for implementation of the changes have necessarily been delayed. As a result, the 2011/12 academic year will be another year with an interim arrangement. This could not have been anticipated at the time the Guidance Statement was published last year.

It has been confirmed there **will** be 300 Diploma awards available for the 2011/12 academic year and these will attach to the universities, rather than the applicants.

## FEE AWARDS ONLY

In 2010/11 maintenance awards ceased to exist and this remains the position for 2011/2012. Once again there will be fees awards only and these will again cover only a proportion of the fees. No recipient of a fees award will be able to apply for a maintenance award as they no longer exist. Supplementary awards for disability, hardship and childcare will continue but will not be administered by SAAS who will no longer undertake any form of means testing or of disbursement of discretionary awards. Instead responsibility for that function will pass to individual universities who will be required to develop a mechanism for assessing applications for the supplementary awards and distributing the funds.

The position in relation to the session 2011/2012 is an interim position only.

You should read the information below which details how many fee awards each PEAT 1 unit is being allocated, and think carefully about where you apply. It is likely the majority of the 300 grants will be allocated in the first round of offers by each Diploma unit:

| <b>PEAT 1 Provider</b>               | <b>Number of Grants 2011/12</b><br><b>(*Part time)</b> | <b>Number of Places</b><br><b>(*Part time)</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>University of Aberdeen</b>        | <b>48</b>  | <b>120</b>                                     |
| <b>University of Dundee</b>          | <b>30</b>  | <b>70</b>                                      |
| <b>University of Edinburgh</b>       | <b>61 (*N/A)</b>                                       | <b>180 (*28)</b>                               |
| <b>The University of Glasgow</b>     | <b>76</b>  | <b>200</b>                                     |
| <b>Robert Gordon University</b>      | <b>13</b>  | <b>48</b>                                      |
| <b>The University of Stirling</b>    | <b>12</b>  | <b>32</b>                                      |
| <b>The University of Strathclyde</b> | <b>60 (*N/A)</b>                                       | <b>150 (*16-24)</b>                            |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>300</b>   | <b>800 (*44-52)</b>                            |

## SESSION 2012/2013 AND BEYOND

To this point, this note has dealt with the position in relation to the forthcoming academic session 2011/2012. This section deals with academic session 2012/2013 and beyond.

**In relation to student support from SAAS** - The Government's review of PSAS funding necessarily involves the Society, Faculty of Advocates and providers of legal education entering into discussions about the future of financial support from the Government in relation to legal education from academic session 2012/2013. It is the intention of the Society, Faculty of Advocates and providers of legal education to continue to lobby Government on behalf of students of legal education in Scotland and provide information to future applicants as soon as it available. However:

**Those considering applying either this year or next should make a decision on the basis that 300 funded places for students embarking on PEAT 1 may not be available after session 2011/2012.**

## WHAT GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD I HAVE WHEN THINKING ABOUT APPLYING FOR A PEAT 1 PLACE?

In previous years, entry to the Diploma has been very competitive. The Society and providers of PEAT 1 recommend this year, as we have in all previous years, that students consider carefully whether to apply for PEAT 1. As this is also the first year of the revised route to qualification, and by extension the introduction of PEAT 1, there are several factors to consider when deciding not only whether to apply for PEAT 1, but which PEAT 1 provider to apply to and the options and courses on offer will vary from provider to provider.

Whilst the decision to apply is yours, you should remember:

- In the years immediately preceding 2009/10, only 70-80% of those applying were successful in gaining a place on the Diploma. In 2009/10 and 2010/2011, applications for the Diploma dropped, but there remains significant competition for traineeships.
- Of those who are successful, a substantial number of students on the Diploma in Legal Practice are self-funders.
- Those who are awarded a funded place will require to make up the shortfall as the funding amounts to £3,400.
- Traineeship recruitment, Honours classification and Diploma entry are not automatically linked, and having a traineeship or a 1<sup>st</sup> class Honours degree may not necessarily improve your chances of a Diploma place. In particular, possession of a traineeship offer will have no effect in relation to allocation of Diploma funding.
- In 2010, 539 traineeships were registered, whereas in that year around 680 Diploma students exited the Diploma (the Law Society of Scotland is currently looking sympathetically at individual applications to extend the validity of the Diploma, which currently expires on 31<sup>st</sup> December in the year two years after you complete your Diploma, in order to assist those seeking traineeships). The number of traineeships registered in 2010 is an increase from 2009 (in which 427 were registered). However **in the current economic climate, securing a traineeship remains very competitive.**
- **The interim changes to SAAS funding for session 2011/2012, and the uncertain position in relation to session 2012/2013, and the introduction PEAT 1 in 2011/2012 mean that you should think carefully about whether you apply and which provider you apply to.**
- It should be noted that all PEAT 1 providers are subject to a Law Society of Scotland accreditation process which is ongoing. All information in regards to the number of places being offered and the course information is subject to each provider being successfully accredited. For details of the accreditation guidelines please visit [www.lawscot.co.uk/members/legal-reform-and-policy/education--training-policy](http://www.lawscot.co.uk/members/legal-reform-and-policy/education--training-policy). If you have any questions in relation to the accreditation process please email [diploma@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:diploma@lawscot.org.uk)

**Embarking on the Diploma gives you the opportunity to compete for entry to the next stage, the traineeship. However, there can be no guarantee that you will secure a traineeship and you must consider your career aspirations and financial position carefully.**

## IS THERE ANY OTHER FUNDING AVAILABLE TO ME?

In the past, many students have funded the Diploma through Career Development Loans. Whilst the Law Society of Scotland does not formally endorse such loans, we note how useful they have been for previous students of the Diploma in Legal Practice. You should note that in the current economic climate it may be more difficult to secure such finance from banks.

You should note the existence of the Pritchard Educational Trust, which was established **to assist those who are of academic ability and wish to qualify as solicitors but who, through financial constraints, are unable to do so**. Particular emphasis is given to those students embarking on the Diploma in Legal Practice.

The Trustees will decide year on year how many grants to distribute, and in recent years between 2 and 5 grants of up to £3,000 have been distributed. You should visit the Society's [website](#) (click on the link if you are reading this on our website, or if you have a paper copy the link is at the bottom of this note) for further information on the Trust. The closing date for applications is Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PEAT

Professional Education and Training (PEAT) is a landmark development in Scottish legal education. In academic session 2011/2012 the Diploma in Legal Practice will become Professional Education and Training stage 1 (PEAT 1) and the traineeship will become Professional Education and Training Stage 2 (PEAT 2). As part of this, the PCC will no longer be required from August 2011 and instead will be replaced by Trainee Continuing Professional Development (TCPD), although the PCC can be deemed as TCPD until September 2013.

PEAT comprises PEAT 1 (the vocational stage, also known as the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice) and PEAT 2 (the work-based stage; also known as the traineeship). PEAT should be regarded as the whole, with PEAT 1 and PEAT 2 forming two components of that whole. PEAT will facilitate the development of legal skills and will integrate these with legal knowledge and ethical behaviours.

PEAT is a two-stage process incorporating the post-graduate vocational element PEAT 1 which is the stage of legal education where knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are learned in a simulated environment.

The work-based element, PEAT 2, is the stage of legal education where the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are built upon and honed in a workplace setting.

PEAT 1 and PEAT 2 should be viewed as a three year process with similar outcomes which are continually assessed over those three years. The vocational element links to the work-based stage and work-based stage builds upon what is learned in the vocational stage.

This means that there are a series of Outcomes which apply across PEAT – PEAT 1 Outcomes and PEAT 2 Outcomes. PEAT 2 builds on what is taught during PEAT 1. For the first time, solicitors will know the minimum of what can be expected from a Day 1 Trainee, as that is demonstrated by the PEAT 1 Outcomes.

**The introduction of PEAT 1 means changes to the course content and the options and electives available will vary from provider to provider. Please ensure you have researched all the options available to you. Further details of all the courses, electives and options can be found by following the links to the 'PEAT 1 Fair' at [www.lawscot.org.uk/becomingasolicitor](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/becomingasolicitor)**

**The provider and electives you choose should be suited to you and the type of organisation at which you intend to practise so you should choose your options carefully.**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In this section the Society will seek to clarify any questions or queries regarding the changes to the route to qualification.

### **Do the changes to education and training apply to me?**

Yes. If you are planning to qualify as a solicitor in Scotland you will be following a path which is different to the one in place when you began the LLB.

- After 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 the Diploma in Legal Practice will cease to exist and will be replaced by the new Diploma in Professional Legal Practice, (PEAT 1). Also on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 the traineeship will become 'Professional Education and Training Stage 2 (PEAT 2)'. The Society will issue guidance about what the new processes and procedures will be prior to you undertaking PEAT 2.
- Further information outlining the detail of the changes can be found at [www.lawscot.co.uk/members/legal-reform-and-policy/education--training-policy](http://www.lawscot.co.uk/members/legal-reform-and-policy/education--training-policy)

### **Why have the changes come about?**

Every industry, business and profession must always ensure they are continuing to improve in order to be effective now and in the future. Many in the profession felt there were areas of legal education and training that needed to be revised – making sure that pre-qualification stages joined up more obviously and, at the end of qualification, newly qualified solicitors were at the standard the profession needs.

This is the most comprehensive review of how solicitors are educated and trained ever undertaken in Scotland. The entire route to qualification has been looked at in an integrated way, and the different strands of work, dealing with different stages of the route into the profession, are interconnected.

## **FURTHER QUESTIONS?**

The purpose of this note is to ensure all potential applicants to PEAT 1 have the relevant facts at their disposal when making a decision. This note does not take account of individual circumstances and advises from a regulatory stance, but the Society has a responsibility to manage the expectations of those who choose to compete for entry to the profession, particularly during a difficult economic time and at a time of transition between PEAT 1 and PEAT 2.

Ultimately the decision to embark on PEAT 1 is yours, and it brings you one step closer to achieving your goal of qualifying as a solicitor. Part of the Society's pastoral role is to be available should you wish to discuss some of the issues contained further with us before you make that choice. If you have any questions about what is contained in this guidance note, please contact the Education and Training Department of the Society:

**[diploma@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:diploma@lawscot.org.uk)**

**[www.lawscot.org.uk/becomingasolicitor](http://www.lawscot.org.uk/becomingasolicitor)**