



Law Society
of Ontario

Barreau
de l'Ontario

Briefing Note

Professional Development & Competence Committee

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Contents

Issue:	2
Context:	2
Next Steps:	3

Issue:

The Professional Development & Competence Committee (“Committee”) is providing an update on enhancements to the experiential training requirement of the lawyer licensing process that were approved by Convocation in December 2018. These enhancements have been put on hold as a result of new priorities that have emerged since the onset of the pandemic.

Context:

In December 2018, after a review of the lawyer licensing process, Convocation affirmed articling and the Law Practice Program/Programme de Pratique du Droit (LPP/PPD) as the two main pathways for transitional training. In addition, enhancements to the experiential training requirement were approved to promote quality placement experiences. The enhancements included mandatory minimum compensation for placements, mandatory education and training for principals and placement supervisors, and increased monitoring of placements through audits and other means. The enhancements were to be implemented by May 1, 2021.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the Law Society has had to quickly pivot most of its core regulatory activities to new modalities. Beginning in early April 2020, several significant adjustments have been made in the licensing area in response to the pandemic, including the following:

- the licensing examinations have been transitioned from a paper-based, in-person format to an online delivery format;
- the licensing examinations have been shortened from 7 hours to 4 hours to facilitate online delivery;
- the minimum length of articling placements has been reduced from 10 months to 8 months;
- articling and summer recruitment timelines and processes have been adjusted; and
- an administrative call to the bar process with rolling call dates has been developed.

These and other modifications have ensured continuity of the licensing process throughout the pandemic. There were over 5000 administrations of the lawyer and paralegal licensing examinations over the summer months. In addition, more than 2000 lawyer and paralegal candidates were licensed during this timeframe.

The development of new processes and platforms to support the pandemic adjustments have had to take priority over other work in progress in the licensing area. This has required a redirection of resources in the licensing department. In particular, the continuation of online examination delivery until April 30, 2021 will be an ongoing priority. As a result, the work on the experiential training enhancements has been put on hold. The enhancements will not be implemented on May 1, 2021 as originally planned.

Next Steps:

The Committee is monitoring the impacts of the pandemic on the licensing process and will consider those impacts as it assesses the need for further adjustments as the situation unfolds. In particular, the Committee continues to receive information from management relating to articling, the LPP/PPD, online licensing examinations and other components of the process on a monthly basis. The LSO is also continuing to gather perspectives from participants in the licensing process including law students, candidates, law schools, articling principals, LPP and PPD partners and others to inform decision making as we move forward.