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Lexcel England and Wales v6

Self assessment checklist for legal practices

Excellence in practice management and client care

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| **How to use this self assessment checklist** | |
| * This self assessment checklist is designed to be used by legal practices working towards Lexcel accreditation, to help identify where gaps exist in meeting requirements in the Standard * Read the requirements and provide evidence of compliance by completing the following two columns in as much detail as you can:   + **Demonstration of compliance** - Briefly describe relevant policies, procedures and supporting documentation already in place that achieves compliance with the requirement   + **Relevant document(s)** - List where to find individual documents (e.g. policies, templates, page, paragraph, etc.) in your practice. If individual documents are referred to, please index them sequentially. For example, document A, document B, etc. * This information will also be used by your assessor to quickly locate and validate your evidence. | |
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| **Your practice's details** | |
| * Please complete the following details: | |
| **Practice name** |  |
| **Full address, incl. postcode** |  |
| **Lexcel contact name** |  |
| **Job title** |  |
| **Telephone** |  |
| **Email** |  |

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| **Questions?** |
| * If, after reading the Standard, Scheme rules and Guidance notes, you have any questions regarding Lexcel, please do not hesitate to contact us:   **Tel:** +44 (0)20 7320 5933 **Email:** lexcel@lawsociety.org.uk |

# 1 - Structure and strategy

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| **Requirement** | 1.1 Practices **must** have documentation setting out the:   1. legal framework under which they operate 2. management structure which designates the responsibilities of individuals and their accountability. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 1.2 Practices **must** have a strategic **plan**, which **must** include:  a. **objectives** for at least the next 12 months  b. the identification of resources required to meet the **objectives**  c. the services the practice wishes to offer  d. the client groups to be served  e. how services will be delivered and marketed  f. documented risk **evaluation** of **objectives**   1. **procedures** for regular reporting on performance | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 1.3 Practices **must** have a business continuity **plan**, which **must** include:   1. an **evaluation** of potential risks that could lead to business interruption 2. ways to reduce, avoid and/or transfer the risks 3. key people relevant to the implementation of the **plan** 4. a **procedure** to test the **plan** annually, to verify that it would be effective in the event of a business interruption. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 1.4 Practices **should** have a **policy** in relation to **corporate social responsibility**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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# 2 - Financial management

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| **Requirement** | 2.1 Practices **must** document the person who has overall responsibility for financial management. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 2.2 Practices **must** be able to provide documentary evidence of their financial management **procedure**, including:   1. annual budget including income and expenditure 2. annual income and expenditure accounts 3. annual balance sheet 4. annual income and expenditure forecast to be reviewed quarterly 5. variance analysis conducted at least quarterly of income and expenditure against budgets 6. variance analysis conducted at least quarterly of cash flow and cash flow forecast. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 2.3 Practices **should** have a time recording **procedure**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 2.4 Practices **must** have a **procedure** in relation to billing clients, which **must** include:   1. the frequency and terms for billing clients 2. credit limits for new and existing clients 3. debt management. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 2.5 Practices handling financial transactions **must** have a **procedure**, which **must** include:   1. the transfer of funds 2. the management of funds received by the practice 3. **authorisations**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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# 3 - Information management

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| **Requirement** | 3.1 Practices **must** have an information management and security **policy**, which **must** include:   1. a **register** of relevant information assets of both the practice and clients 2. **procedures** for the protection and security of the information assets 3. **procedures** for the retention and disposal of information 4. the use of firewalls 5. **procedures** for the secure configuration of network devices 6. **procedures** to manage user accounts 7. **procedures** to detect and remove **malicious software** 8. a **register** of all software used by the practice 9. training for **personnel** on information security 10. a **plan** for the updating and monitoring of software. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 3.2 Practices **must** have an e-mail **policy**, which **must** include:   1. the scope of permitted and prohibited use 2. **procedures** for monitoring **personnel** using e-mail 3. **procedures** for the storage and destruction of emails | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 3.3 If the practice has a website, the practice **must** have a website management **policy**, which **must** include:   1. a **procedure** for content approval, publishing and removal 2. the scope of permitted and prohibited content 3. **procedures** for the management of its security 4. consideration of accessibility requirements for disabled clients. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 3.4 Practices **must** have an internet access **policy**, which **must** include:   1. the scope of permitted and prohibited use 2. **procedures** for monitoring **personnel** accessing the internet. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 3.5 Practices **must** have a social media **policy**, which **must** include:   1. a **procedure** for participating in social media on behalf of the practice 2. the scope of permitted and prohibited content. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 3.6 Practices **must** have:   1. a **register** of each **plan**, **policy** and **procedure** that is contained in the Lexcel Standard 2. a named person responsible for each **policy**, **plan** and **procedure** that is contained in the Lexcel Standard 3. a **procedure** for the review of each **policy**, **plan** and **procedure** that is contained in the Lexcel Standard. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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# 4 - People management

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| **Requirement** | 4.1 Practices **must** have a **policy** in relation to the health and safety of all **personnel** and visitors to the practice. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.2 Practices **must** have an equality and diversity **policy**, which **must** include:   1. recruitment, selection and progression 2. a **procedure** to deal with complaints and disciplinary issues in breach of the **policy** 3. a **procedure** to monitor diversity and collate equality data 4. training of all **personnel** on compliance with equality and diversity requirements 5. **procedures** for **reasonable adjustments** for **personnel**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.3 Practices **must** have a learning and development **policy**,which **must** include:   1. ensuring that appropriate training is provided to **personnel** within the practice 2. ensuring that all **supervisors** and managers receive appropriate training 3. a **procedure** to evaluate training 4. a learning and development **plan** for all **personnel**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.4 Practices **must** list the tasks to be undertaken by all **personnel** within the practice usually in the form of a **role profile**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.5 Practices **must** have **procedures** to deal effectively with recruitment selection and progression, which **must** include:   1. the identification of vacancies 2. the drafting of the job documentation 3. methods of attracting candidates 4. clear and transparent selection 5. storage, retention and destruction of records 6. references and ID checking 7. where appropriate, the checking of disciplinary records. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.6 Practices **must** conduct an appropriate induction for all **personnel**, including those transferring roles within the practice and **must** cover:   1. the management structure and the individual’s responsibilities 2. terms and conditions of employment 3. immediate training requirements 4. key **policies**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.7 Practices **must** have a **procedure** which details the steps to be followed when a member of **personnel** ceases to be an employee, which **must** include:   1. the handover of work 2. exit interviews 3. the return of property belonging to the practice. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.8 Practices **must** have a performance management **policy**, which **must** include:   1. the practice's approach to performance management 2. performance review periods and timescales. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.9 Practices **must** have a whistleblowing **policy**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 4.10 Practices **must** have a **flexible working** **policy**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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# 5 - Risk management

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| **Requirement** | 5.1 Practices **must** have a risk management **policy**, which **must** include:   1. a compliance **plan** 2. a **risk register** 3. defined risk management roles and responsibilities 4. arrangements for communicating risk information. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.2 Practices **must** have a **policy** in relation to outsourced activities, which **must** include:   1. details of all outsourced activities including providers 2. **procedures** to check the quality of outsourced work 3. **procedures** to ensure providers have taken appropriate precautions to ensure information will be protected. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.3 There **must** be a named **supervisor** for each area of work undertaken by the practice. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.4 Practices **must** have **procedures** to manage instructions, which may be undertaken even though they have a higher **risk profile**, including unusual supervisory and reporting requirements or contingency planning. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.5 Practices **must** maintain lists of work that the practice will and will not undertake. This information **must** be communicated to all relevant **personnel** and **must** be updated when changes occur. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.6 Practices **must** maintain details of the generic risks and causes of claims associated with the area(s) of work undertaken by the practice. This information **must** be communicated to all relevant **personnel**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.7 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to monitor key dates, which **must** include:   1. the definition of key dates by work type 2. ensuring that key dates are recorded on the file and in a back-up system. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.8 Practices **must** have a **policy** on the handling of conflicts, which **must** include:   1. the definition of conflicts 2. training for all relevant **personnel** to identify conflicts 3. steps to be followed when a conflict is identified. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.9 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to ensure that all **personnel**, both permanent and temporary, are actively supervised. Such **procedures must** include:   1. checks on incoming and outgoing correspondence where appropriate 2. departmental, team and office meetings and communication structures 3. reviews of matter details in order to ensure good financial controls and the appropriate allocation of workloads 4. the exercise of devolved powers in publicly funded work 5. the availability of a **supervisor** 6. allocation of new work and reallocation of existing work, if necessary. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.10 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to ensure that all those doing legal work check their files regularly for inactivity. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.11 Practices **must** have a **procedure** for regular, independent file reviews of either the management of the file or its substantive legal content, or both. In relation to file reviews, practices **must**:   1. define and explain file selection criteria 2. define and explain the number and frequency of reviews 3. retain a record of the file review on the matter file and centrally 4. ensure any corrective action, which is identified in a file review, is acted upon within 28 days and verified 5. ensure that the designated **supervisor** reviews and monitors the data generated by file reviews 6. conduct a review at least annually of the data generated by file reviews. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.12 Operational risk **must** be considered and recorded in all matters before, during and after the processing of instructions. Before the matter is undertaken, the fee earners **must**:   1. consider if a new client and/or matter, is accepted by the practice, in accordance with section 6.1 and 6.7 below 2. assess the risk profile of all new instructions and notify the **supervisor**, in accordance with **procedures** under 5.4, of any unusual or high risk considerations in order that appropriate action may be taken.   During the retainer the fee earner **must**:   1. consider any change to the **risk profile** of the matter and report and advise on such circumstances without delay, informing the **supervisor** if appropriate 2. inform the client in all cases where an adverse costs order is made against the practice in relation to the matter in question.   At the end of the matter the fee earner **must**:   1. undertake a concluding risk assessment by considering if the client’s **objectives** have been achieved 2. notify the **supervisor** of all such circumstances in accordance with documented **procedures** in section 5.4 above. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.13 Practices **must** have a **policy** to ensure compliance with anti-money laundering legislation, which **must** include:   1. the appointment of a nominated officer usually referred to as a Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO) 2. a **procedure** for making disclosures within the practice and by the MLRO to the authorities 3. **procedures** for checking the identity of the practice’s clients 4. a **plan** for the training of **personnel** 5. **procedures** for the proper maintenance of records. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.14 Practices **should** have a **policy** in relation to the avoidance of involvement in property and mortgage fraud, which **must** include:   1. carrying out relevant checks in relation to the conveyancer acting for the other party. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.15 Practices **must** have a **policy** setting out the **procedures** to prevent bribery in accordance with current legislation. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 5.16 Practices will analyse at least annually all risk assessment data generated within the practice. This **must** include:   1. any indemnity insurance claims (where applicable) 2. an analysis of client complaints trends 3. data generated by file reviews 4. any matters notified to the COLP and/or COFA 5. any material breaches notified to the SRA 6. any non-material breaches recorded 7. situations where the practice acted where a conflict existed 8. the identification of remedial action. | |
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# 6 - Client care

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| **Requirement** | 6.1 Practices **must** have a **policy** for client care, including:  a. how enquiries from potential clients will be dealt with  b. ensuring that before taking on a client, the practice has sufficient resources and competence to deal with the matter  c. protecting client confidentiality  d. a timely response is made to telephone calls and correspondence from the client and others  e. a **procedure** for referring clients to third parties  f. the provision of **reasonable adjustments** for disabled clients. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.2 Practices **must** communicate the following to clients in writing, unless an alternative form of communication is deemed more appropriate:  a. where appropriate, establish the client’s requirements and **objectives**  b. provide a clear explanation of the issues involved and the options available to the client  c. explain what the fee earner will and will not do  d. agree with the client the next steps to be taken  e. keep the client informed of progress, as agreed  f. establish in what timescale that matter will be dealt with  g. establish the method of funding  h. where appropriate, consider whether the intended action would be merited on a cost benefit analysis  i. agree an appropriate level of service  j. explain the practice's responsibilities and the client’s  k. provide the client with the name and status of the person dealing with their matter  l. provide the client with the name and status of the person responsible for the overall supervision of their matter. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.3 Practices **must** have a record of any standing terms of business with regular clients. The practice **must** be able to produce such terms in relation to issues covered by this section. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.4 Practices **must** give clients the best information possible about the likely overall cost of the matter, both at the outset and when appropriate, as the matter progresses. In particular practices **must**:  a. advise the client of the basis of the practice's charging  b. advise the client where the practice will receive a financial benefit as a result of accepting instructions  c. advise the client if the charging rates are to be increased  d. advise the client of likely payments which the practice or the client may need to make to others  e. discuss with the client how they will pay  f. advise the client that there are circumstances where the practice may be entitled to exercise a lien for unpaid costs  g. advise the client of their potential liability for any other party’s costs. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.5 Practices **must** operate a written complaints handling **procedure**, including:  a. the definition of what the practice regards as a complaint  b. informing the client at the outset of the matter, that in the event of a problem they are entitled to complain  c. the name of the person with overall responsibility for complaints  d. providing the client with a copy of the practice’s complaints **procedure**, if requested  e. once a complaint has been made, the person complaining is informed in writing:  (i) how the complaint will be handled; and  (ii) in what time they will be given an initial and/or substantive response  f. recording and reporting centrally all complaints received from clients  g. identifying the cause of any problems of which the client has complained offering any appropriate redress, and correcting any unsatisfactory **procedures**. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.6 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to monitor client satisfaction across all areas of the practice. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 6.7 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to accept or decline instructions, which **must** include:   1. how decisions are made to accept instructions from new and existing clients 2. how decisions are made to stop acting for an existing client 3. how decisions are made to decline instructions. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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# 7 - File and case management

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| **Requirement** | 7.1 Practices **must** ensure that the strategy for a matter is always apparent on the matter file and that in complex cases a project plan is developed. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 7.2 Practices **must** document **procedures** for the giving, monitoring and discharge of undertakings. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 7.3 Practices **must** have a **procedure** to:  a. list open and closed matters, identify all matters for a single client and linked files where relevant and all files for a particular funder  b. ensure that they are able to identify and trace any documents, files, deeds, wills or any other items relating to the matter  c. safeguard the confidentiality of matter files and all other client information  d. ensure that the status of the matter and the action taken can be easily checked by other members of the practice  e. ensure that documents are stored on the matter file(s) in an orderly way. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 7.4 Practices will have **procedures** to ensure that matters are progressed in an appropriate manner. In particular:  a. key information **must** be recorded on the file  b. a timely response is made to telephone calls and correspondence from the client and others  c. continuing cost information is provided  d. clients are informed in writing if the person with conduct of their matter changes, or there is a change of person to whom any problem with service may be addressed. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 7.5 Practices **must** have a documented **procedure** for using barristers, expert witnesses and other external advisers who are involved in the delivery of legal services, which must include provision for the following:  a. use of clear selection criteria in line with the equality and diversity **policy**  b. where appropriate, consult with the client in relation to the selection of an advocate or other professional  c. advising the client of the name and status of the person being instructed, how long she/he might take to respond and, where disbursements are to be paid by the client, the cost involved  d. maintenance of records (centrally, by department or office) on barristers and experts used, including evidence of assessment against the criteria  e. **evaluation** of performance, for the information of other members of the practice  f. giving clear instructions  g. checking of opinions and reports received to ensure they adequately provide the information sought (and, in litigation matters, comply with the rules of court and any court orders)  h. payment of fees. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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| **Requirement** | 7.6 Practices **must** have **procedures** to ensure that, at the end of the matter, the practice:  a. if required, reports to the client on the outcome and explains any further action that the client is required to take in the matter and what (if anything) the practice will do  b. accounts to the client for any outstanding money  c. returns to the client any original documents or other property belonging to the client if required (save for items which are by agreement to be stored by the practice)  d. if appropriate, advises the client about arrangements for storage and retrieval of papers and other items retained (in so far as this has not already been dealt with, for example in terms of business) and any charges to be made in this regard  e. advises the client whether it is appropriate to review the matter in future and, if so, when and why  f. archives and destroys files in an appropriate manner. | |
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| **Demonstration of compliance** | | **Relevant document(s)** |
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