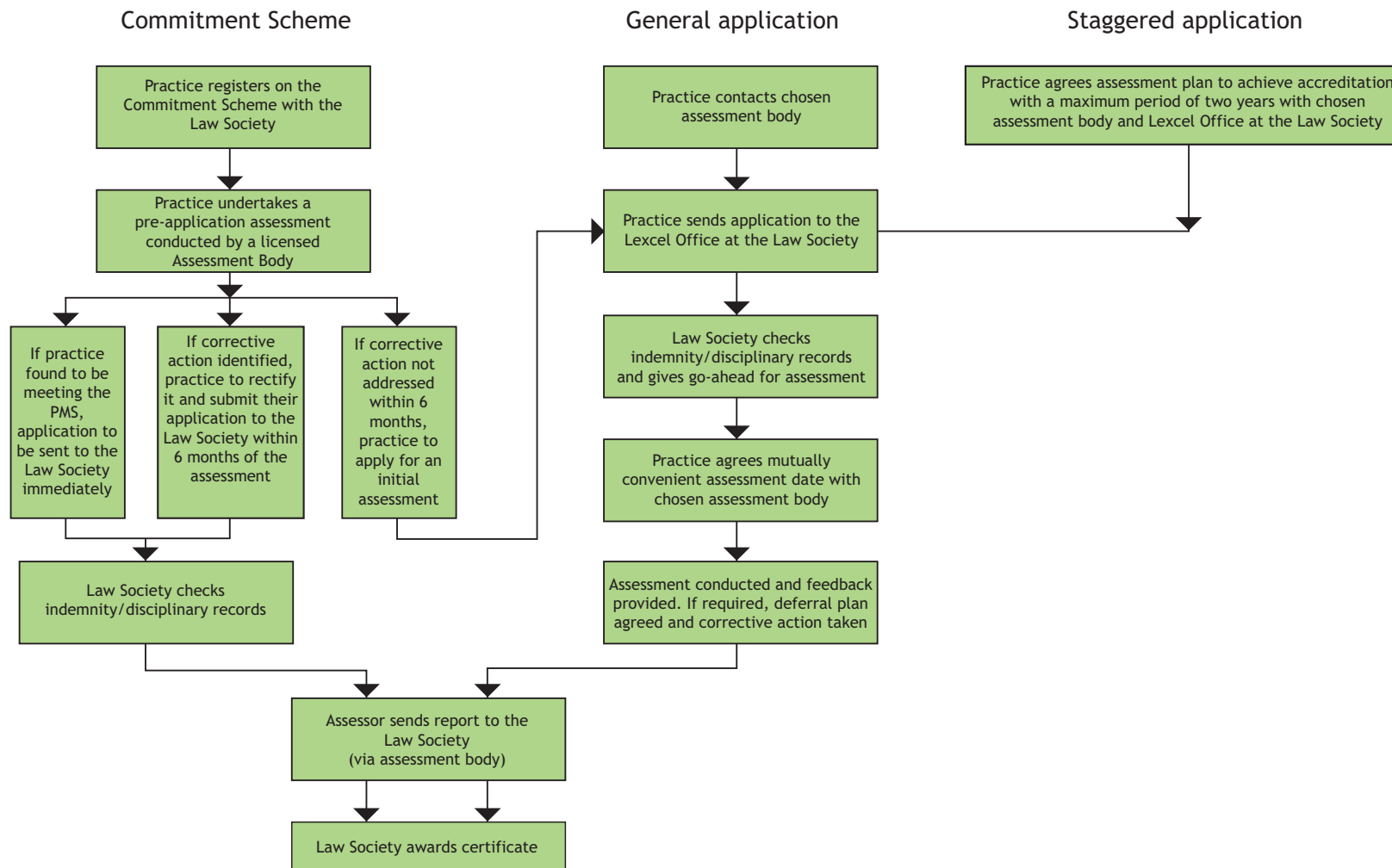


Applying for Lexcel accreditation

These guidance notes are for practices applying for assessment. More comprehensive guidance and application forms can be obtained from the Law Society website or the Lexcel Office.



Lexcel Commitment Scheme

The scheme has been developed to encourage practices to register their genuine commitment towards applying for Lexcel accreditation. The scheme was developed to enhance motivation and provide a deadline for the practices to work towards.

Choosing an assessment body

Before submitting an application form, practices should contact their chosen Lexcel assessment body. If a practice intends to apply for Lexcel assessment only, it should make little difference which assessment body it chooses. Practices should be aware that assessment bodies have different fee structures so it is advisable to seek quotes.

The choice of assessment body may be influenced by whether the practice already has the ISO 9000 or Investors in People quality mark, or plans to achieve either quality mark in the future, since simultaneous assessments can be arranged. As a result, the overlaps with the Lexcel requirements may be taken into account on assessment to reduce the time and cost involved.

General application

Once your practice has satisfied itself that it meets the Lexcel requirements an application form should be submitted to the Lexcel Office at the Law Society. The Lexcel Office will provide your chosen assessment body with a copy of the application form and other relevant information.

Practices are required to disclose their professional conduct status and indemnity insurance claims as part of the application process. It is the responsibility of the practice to inform staff that their records may be accessed as part of the Lexcel application process. Each application for assessment is considered on a case by case basis. The assessment body and practice will be informed whether the assessment may proceed or not. Practices must inform the Law Society of any changes to the practice's disciplinary records or indemnity claims after the approval to proceed to assessment has been given.

Pre-application assessment

This is available to all practices that have registered on the Commitment Scheme. A pre-application assessment allows for that diagnostic assessment to be conducted and for any areas of compliance to be credited towards the practice's formal Lexcel assessment, provided that it's conducted by a licensed Lexcel assessor. This can, therefore, reduce the time and cost for the practice.

Once the pre-application assessment has taken place, the practices have a maximum of six months in which to submit their application for assessment and have their initial assessment. If a practice meets all the Lexcel requirements at the pre-application assessment, it will not be necessary to have an initial assessment and practices should submit their application as soon as possible.

Staggered assessment

Practices will be allowed to stagger Lexcel assessment over a limited number of coherent stages if they can justify why this method of assessment is more suitable for them in comparison to the general application route. All departments and offices of the practice must be assessed within a maximum period of two years.

The Lexcel Office will part award the practice at each successful stage of the assessment by issuing the practice with a certificate stating which stage of the assessment they have completed. Only once the whole practice has been fully assessed will they be issued with a Lexcel accreditation certificate. When the whole practice has Lexcel accreditation the practice would revert to the first stage of the assessment and have a maintenance visit. All further stages of the assessment would be spaced out according to when each stage of the part accreditation was given.

Before a practice is permitted to have a staggered assessment, the overall strategy for the whole practice to gain Lexcel accreditation must be agreed with the practice's chosen assessment body and the Lexcel Office.