

ENTRY INTO GGSL THE DIPLOMA IN LEGAL PRACTICE
GUIDANCE NOTES FOR LLB STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF STRATHCLYDE
2009/2010

(1) The Diploma in Legal Practice is offered by the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Stirling, Robert Gordon University and jointly by the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde under the auspices of the Glasgow Graduate School of Law (GGSL). The GGSL Diploma is taught at Strathclyde University, primarily in the Lord Hope Building.

Applying to the Glasgow Graduate School of Law

(2) As well as the General Diploma application form, you should complete the special GGSL form, and return both of them to the address at para 5 below **by Thursday 30th April 2009**. The general form must be accompanied by two colour, passport-style photographs, with your name and “Strathclyde University” clearly printed on the reverse. **Late submission will disqualify you from SAAS funding and may prejudice your application generally.**

(3) There are two optional courses on the DLP - Public Administration and Company and Commercial. You must opt for one or the other in your application, but this information is sought for planning purposes only: your selection does not preclude a later change of mind.

(4) If there are special circumstances which you would like to be taken account in considering whether you are admitted/awarded SAAS funding (for example, where performance has been affected by illness), you should attach an appropriate statement to your application. Such circumstances should normally be backed up with appropriate evidence and you may wish to augment this with a statement from an academic referee, such as your adviser of studies or your counsellor. (Please ensure, however, that you do NOT give the application form itself to such a referee).

(5) If you have any queries, you should initially contact Kirsty Stewart or Liz McCallum, Glasgow Graduate School of Law, Lord Hope Building, level 2, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT. Tel: 0141 548 4945/3046;
email: law-dlpadmissions@strath.ac.uk

Applying to another institution (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Robert Gordon University or Stirling)

(6) If you intend to apply to an institution other than the Glasgow Graduate School of Law, complete only the General Diploma application form, and return it to Ms Liz McCallum, Centre for Professional Legal Studies, Level 2, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Street, Glasgow G4 0LT **by Thursday 30th April 2009**. Do not give the form directly to your adviser of studies. Thereafter, you will be contacted by the university of your choice. Two colour, passport-style photographs must accompany your application, with your name and “Strathclyde University” clearly printed on the reverse. You should

also enclose a copy of your academic transcript, or forward that later once your results are available.

The GGSL Diploma in Legal Practice

(7) Since 1999 the Law Schools in the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde have been co-operating on a range of issues, and in particular in offering the Diploma in Legal Practice through their joint venture, the Glasgow Graduate School of Law (GGSL). The Diploma in Legal Practice is an ideal subject for such co-operation, as a nationally designed course, which should adopt a more or less identical format wherever it is offered. It made little sense to have two such courses on offer within a couple of miles of each other.

(8) The significant administrative savings and economies of scale achieved through offering a joint Diploma in Legal Practice, together with the tangible support of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, has allowed the GGSL Diploma to develop expertise and levels of professionalism that would not have been possible otherwise. Both Universities believe, and many in the legal profession now recognise, that the GGSL Diploma is the leader in its field. Its innovative style of teaching and extensive use of IT has brought it world-wide renown in the field of professional legal training.

(9) The Diploma is awarded jointly by the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde. Students are matriculated at both Universities and have full access to the facilities of both.

Diploma Syllabus

(10) The courses studied are:

Foundation Course in Professional Legal Skills
 Civil Court Practice
 Conveyancing
 Criminal Court Practice
 Financial Services and Accountancy
 Practice Management
 Private Client
 Professional Ethics

Plus either one of

- (a) Company and Commercial, *or*
- (b) Public Administration

Criteria for Admission to the Diploma in Legal Practice and for Distribution of SAAS Awards

Admission

- (11) In order to be admitted to the Diploma in Legal Practice a candidate must:
- (a) have a law degree from a Scottish University or equivalent; and
 - (b) have passed or been exempted from the professional examinations of the Law Society of Scotland in the subjects specified in the Admission as Solicitor (Scotland) Regulations ('the professional subjects', listed at para 12 below).

However, a candidate lacking one of these requirements may **exceptionally** be admitted at the discretion of the Diploma Admissions Committee provided he or she can satisfy the requirement during the period of study for the diploma (in other words it is possible to enter the diploma without having graduated or without having passed one of the professional subjects). In such cases the Diploma will not be awarded unless and until the missing requirement is satisfied.

Professional Subjects

- (12) Each university in Scotland meets the requirements of the Law Society of Scotland Examination Syllabus in a different way. The classes taken within the LLB at Strathclyde University that satisfy these requirements are as follows:

- Legal Methods
- Legal Process
- Public Law
- Criminal Law
- Contract
- Delict
- Property
- Domestic Relations
- Commercial Law: Transactions
- Commercial Law: Organisations
- EC Law
- Tax Law
- Evidence

Ranking of Candidates

- (13) **In recent years there have always been substantially more qualified applicants to the GGSL Diploma than there are places available.** Where there are more qualified applicants than places available, the primary criterion used to rank candidates for admission is performance in the classes that are required for entry into the Diploma (above at para 12) - with the exception of EC Law (though that exception may be removed in the near future). Very similar criteria are used to determine the distribution of SAAS awards. Performance is ranked in terms of an average derived by dividing the marks obtained in the professional subjects by the number of classes.

- (14) The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS - <http://www.student-support-saas.gov.uk/>) annually makes available a limited number of awards for students entering upon the Diploma in Legal Practice. These awards cover a proportion of the fees, and in some cases additional means tested maintenance grants. Given that there are more than

double the number of Diploma places across Scotland than grants, the SAAS has entered into an arrangement with the professions and the law schools whereby the available awards are distributed by the Diploma Co-ordinating Committee of the Law Society of Scotland, upon which the Faculty of Advocates and the Law Schools are represented. The DCC has established criteria for distribution which will allow applicants from the different law schools to be compared on an equal footing. **As with Diploma places, the main criterion is relative performance in the classes which are required for entry into the Diploma** (para 12 above).

Please note the behind-the-scenes working of the SAAS grant distribution process has changed for session 2009/10 and will change again in 2010/11. A guidance note has been prepared by the Law Society of Scotland on the matter and is attached for information.

(15) At the level of the individual applicant an important consideration both in relation to admission and to the distribution of SAAS awards is that it is the first recorded mark in the class that is used to determine an applicant's average, even when the first recorded mark is a fail mark and a higher (pass) mark is subsequently achieved. A fail mark that has been discounted will not be recorded.

(16) Both in relation to admission to the Diploma and the distribution of SAAS awards, when two or more applicants have virtually the same average over all the professional classes, other factors may be used if it becomes necessary to distinguish between them. Other factors for this purpose might include, for example, performance at Honours, work experience, medical, personal or other circumstances affecting performance in the professional classes and any other circumstance which the Diploma Admissions Committee (or the Diploma Co-ordinating Committee) considers relevant to a determination of relative merit between applicants. Holding an offer of a traineeship may also be such a factor taken into account but only in relation to admission to the Diploma and not in relation to the award of a SAAS grant.

If you wish individual circumstances such as illness affecting performance in professional classes or holding an offer of a traineeship to be taken into account, you must mention these at section D of the application form. Matters not listed there will not be taken into account unless they arise after submission of the application form.

Schedule for Admission to the Glasgow Graduate School of Law

(17) **30th April 2009** - Deadline for submission of applications.

(18) **May 2009** – The Glasgow Graduate School of Law will send letters to each individual applicant acknowledging the application. The letter will also indicate that while Strathclyde Law School will continue to handle the matter of potential qualification for a SAAS Award for Strathclyde graduates, course administration will otherwise be dealt with by the Glasgow Graduate School of Law.

(19) **Mid-July 2009** – Distribution of the first tranche of SAAS Awards. The key criterion continues to be performance in the professional subjects. An initial distribution of 75-80% of the awards is usually made at this stage, with the remainder being distributed in late September. The GGSL Diploma Admissions Committee decides

which GGSL applicants should receive offers at this stage. Very similar criterion will be applied as determines qualification for an SAAS award. Those who have qualified for an SAAS Award will certainly receive an offer. The first tranche of letters will then be sent to applicants. The letter will be one of the following:

- (i) an offer of a funded place (accompanied by the relevant SAAS Award forms);
- (ii) an offer of an unfunded place, with an indication that an award of funding may yet be made later in the year;
- (iii) a bare offer of an unfunded place (if applicant not eligible for an SAAS Award);
- (iv) a letter indicating that the application is being, at this stage, rejected. The applications of eligible but rejected candidates will be considered by other Diploma providers, and again by GGSL if places subsequently become available. **Applicants need not apply again for session 2009/10 to other Diploma providers.**

(20) **Friday 31st July 2009** - Deadline for acceptance of July offers. If you have received an offer in a letter (i), (ii) or (iii) above, you **MUST** respond by this date AND IF YOU DO NOT DO SO THE OFFER WILL BE WITHDRAWN FROM YOU AND TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER ELIGIBLE CANDIDATE. If you are planning to be out of the country or otherwise unavailable at this crucial time you must make arrangements for your mail to be forwarded or otherwise dealt with.

Shortly after this date, the Diploma Admissions Committee will make further offers of unfunded places.

(21) **Friday 28th August 2009**– Deadline for acceptance of August offers. If you do not respond by this date the offer will be withdrawn and may be transferred to another eligible candidate.

(22) **Early September** Applicants awaiting results from the August diet of exams to be dealt with. This will be on the same basis as applications determined earlier, both for admissions and for SAAS awards.

(23) **Late September/early October** – The GGSL Diploma Admissions Committee will make final decisions on admissions and on the distribution of the remaining SAAS grants. Successful applicants will be contacted accordingly.

(24) **Tuesday 29th September 2009** - Course begins.

Deferral

(25) It is **not** possible to defer the offer of a place and/or a SAAS grant until a later year.

It is however always possible to delay one's application until another year. Once qualified for entry, a student can delay application indefinitely (assuming entry requirements do not change). It is not, however, possible to accept an offer one year and defer taking up the place secured until a subsequent year, for the level of competition between applicants changes year on year.

If you have accepted a place and then find you cannot take it up, you will be obliged to apply again, and compete again, next year. **IF YOU FIND THAT YOU ARE**

UNABLE TO TAKE UP A PLACE YOU HAVE BEEN OFFERED, YOU MUST LET GGSL KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - OTHERWISE YOU RISK DENYING ANOTHER ELIGIBLE CANDIDATE A PLACE. THAT WOULD BE ROTTEN OF YOU.

Fees

(26) The fee charged for the GGSL Diploma in 2009/10 will be approximately £5,250. This is higher than the standard postgraduate SAAS award (which at the moment is around £3,000). The reason for this is that it is not possible to deliver the new Diploma with its enhanced skills content for any less. There will be an additional fee to cover the cost of course materials. It may be noted that the fees (excluding the cost of materials) for the corresponding course in England are generally in excess of £7,000 with some providers charging a figure nearer £9,000.

Post-Diploma Professional Training

(27) There are two further elements to the professional training programme which potential solicitors require to follow after the Diploma, namely a Traineeship and the Professional Competence Course. The following general information about these elements is reproduced from the website of the Law Society of Scotland (<http://www.lawscot.org.uk/>), 'Training & Education', from where further details can be obtained:

After successful completion of the degree and diploma, all intending solicitors must serve a two year post-diploma training contract with a practising solicitor in Scotland. The Society recommends rates for trainee salaries and the majority of firms apply these rates. From 1 June 2008, the recommended rates are £15,500 for a first year trainee and £18,550 for a second year trainee. The rates are reviewed annually.

Trainees must complete logbooks detailing the work they have been exposed to. The Society requires all trainers to review progress quarterly. This forms the basis of the ongoing assessment process known as the Test of Professional Competence.

After six months of training, trainees are required to attend a Professional Competence Course, which comprises 36 hours of core requirements and 18 hours of electives. Attendance at the course is an integral part of the traineeship.

After completing the first year of training, a trainee can, subject to satisfactory progress and with the agreement of the training firm, apply to be admitted as a solicitor in order to gain valuable experience of appearing in court.

At the end of the training, the training firm will be required to discharge the training contract.

March 2009