

Conveyancing Quality Scheme Scheme Rules

Version: November 2024



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Law Society's Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS) is an accreditation for practices who undertake residential conveyancing. The scheme sets out the standard of competence, risk management and client service levels expected of practices carrying out residential conveyancing. The scheme rules set out the requirements for achieving initial accreditation, the requirements for maintaining accreditation and the requirements for achieving reaccreditation.
- 1.2. CQS is underpinned by three core values:
 - Risk management: members proactively and effectively manage risk.
 - Best practice in residential conveyancing: members demonstrate thorough knowledge and skill in handling conveyancing transactions.
 - Excellence in client care: members provide effective and appropriate service to their clients.
- 1.3. These values are the foundation for the scheme standards.
- 1.4. The scheme is designed to produce benefits not only for member practices but also for consumers, clients and industry stakeholders, lenders, and insurers.
- 1.5. Obtaining accreditation is a prerequisite for many Lenders panel membership, including but not limited to:
 - Santander
 - Yorkshire Bank
 - Clydesdale Bank
 - Nationwide
 - HSBC UK
 - Metrobank
 - The objectives of the Scheme are to:
 - Provide assurance to key stakeholders, lenders, insurers, consumers and clients that member practices meet the standards.
 - Provide assurance as to the financial probity of member practices.
 - Ensure consistent quality standards throughout the residential conveyancing process.
 - Maintain quality through annual reaccreditation assessment.

- Increase client recognition of quality standards for residential conveyancing.
- Minimise the risk of bogus practices/individuals.
- Improve efficiency with common, consistent standards and service levels.
- Promote proactive operational risk management.
- Ensure all relevant members of staff are kept up to date with changes in law and practice by way of mandatory training.
- Support member practices in the transition towards e-conveyancing.

2. Version

2.1. This version of the scheme rules replaces the scheme rules version 3 July 2024 and will apply from **1 November 2024**. The Scheme Rules are a living document and will be updated from time to time.

3. Glossary of terms

3.1. For ease of reference, the generic term 'practice' is used throughout the Scheme Rules.

Term	Definition
DBS Certificate	<p>Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate.</p> <p>The Senior Responsible Officer, Head of Conveyancing, managers and qualified conveyancers must submit a DBS certificate with the application form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When applying for initial accreditation; or • Every three years; or • As required by the Accreditations office <p>The DBS Certificate must be dated within six months of the submission of the application.</p> <p>The DBS Certificate must be obtained from a third-party provider prior to submitting the application. It remains the responsible of the practice to undertake the relevant DBS checks as this is not undertaken by the CQS office.</p>
HOC	Head of Conveyancing

	<p>This is a key role within the practice to support compliance with CQS standards and ensure effective supervision across the residential conveyancing department.</p> <p>The HOC must accordingly be suitably experienced and be able to demonstrate the required competences to carry out the responsibilities of this role.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the SRO to ensure that the HOC is suitable for the role and has received relevant training.</p>
<p>Managers</p>	<p>A partner in a partnership, a member in an LLP, a director in a company, or a sole practitioner.</p> <p>All managers must be included in the application, regardless of practice area.</p> <p>For firms with more than 10 managers, details for 10 individuals must be provided. This must include those involved in residential conveyancing as a priority, followed by senior managers, regardless of practice area.</p>
<p>Mandatory training</p>	<p>Training mandated by the Accreditations Office.</p> <p>Initial accreditation</p> <p>There is training that is mandated for those who apply for initial accreditation.</p> <p>This is financial crime and protocol in practice.</p> <p>This training will need to be completed prior to submission of the application.</p> <p>This is once off training and is not intended to be repeated annually.</p> <p>However, where the syllabus is updated, this training may be required to be re-taken by all relevant persons.</p> <p>SRO will be notified with any timeframe for compliance, which will be not less than 12 months.</p> <p>Reaccreditation:</p> <p>There is training that is mandated for those who apply for reaccreditation.</p>

	<p>These are the annual update training modules: Risk, Compliance and Client Care; and Conveyancing Practice.</p> <p>Training must be completed annually and prior to submitting the application for reaccreditation.</p> <p>Evidence of completing the mandatory training must be submitted when submitting the online application for initial accreditation or reaccreditation, whichever is applicable. The evidence of completion must have been provided by an authorised training provider and must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the name of the person who has undertaken the training, the date the training was taken, and <p>confirmation that the training has been successfully completed, obtaining the requisite pass mark.</p>
Must	A mandatory requirement.
Personnel	All persons working within the residential conveyancing department, team or section of the practice including permanent and temporary staff, those working remotely and/or onsite, and any working part-time or on a consultancy-basis to which the Core Practice Management Standards apply.
Relevant persons	<p>Staff who are required to complete the mandatory training. Persons who must complete the training are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a conveyancer (regardless of status or qualification) <p>The SRO should decide whether key support staff need to complete the training. This will depend on their involvement in the conveyancing process.</p>
Scheme	The Conveyancing Quality Scheme
SRO	<p>Senior Responsible Officer</p> <p>Must be a manager and be able to meet the requirements of the scheme rules.</p>

SRO Certification Exam

This Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Certification Exam replaced the Core Training: Role of the SRO.

All SROs (new SROs and existing SROs) are required to undertake the SRO Certification prior to submitting their application for accreditation or reaccreditation, whichever is applicable.

The questions within the exam are designed to evaluate and ensure the SRO's competency in understanding, and the ability to demonstrate effective knowledge of, the core CQS elements, which are:

- The CQS Scheme Rules
- The CQS Client Service Charter
- The Law Society Conveyancing Protocol
- The CQS Core Practice Management Standards
- The Onsite Assessment Guidance Notes

If the SRO practices conveyancing, in addition to the exam certification, the mandatory training certificates must be submitted.

Preparation training is not required prior to undertaking the SRO certification exam.

4. Standards

4.1. The scheme standards comprise of:

- The Core Practice Management Standards (CPMS).
- The Law society's Conveyancing Protocol (the Protocol).
- The Client Service Charter (CSC).
- Onsite Assessment Guidance Notes.

4.2. All accredited practices are required to comply with the scheme standards. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Scheme may result in the practice having its accreditation suspended or withdrawn.

4.3. All accredited practices are required to comply with requests from the Accreditations office. Failure to comply with any request from the

Accreditations office may result in the practice having its accreditation suspended or withdrawn.

5. Eligibility

- 5.1. The practice must be regulated by the SRA in order to be eligible to apply for accreditation, such as a law practice in the form of partnerships, limited liability partnerships, legal disciplinary partnership, sole practitioner practices, alternative business structures and incorporated law firms.
- 5.2. The practice must undertake residential conveyancing or intend to undertake residential conveyancing.

6. Application process

- 6.1. Practices must complete the application form for accreditation online. Payment of the application fee and membership fee must be paid online prior to submitting the application form. Details of the fees are set out on the [website](#) and may be updated from time to time. If you choose to pay via BACS, please ensure that the payment has cleared before submitting.
- 6.2. Practices applying for reaccreditation must start the online application form prior to their current accreditation expiring. Application forms can only be started 90 days prior to expiration. Failure to start and submit the online application form prior to the current accreditation expiring, will result in the accreditation being automatically withdrawn. It is the responsibility of the SRO to ensure that the practice maintains its accredited status.
- 6.3. Confirmation of payment through the online portal does not constitute submission of the application. Payment can be made throughout any stage of the application, prior to submission.
- 6.4. The practice may request a one-off extension using the online extension form. The option of purchasing an extension is only possible 14 days prior to expiration. The extension provides the practice with 30 calendar days to complete the online application form. The extension does not extend the length of the membership. The accredited practice's membership will not expire during the 30 calendar days. The extension is subject to the payment of an administrative fee.
- 6.5. All practices must have a nominated SRO. The SRO must be appointed prior to the practice applying for accreditation. Should the practice change the SRO, the Accreditations office must be contacted so that the records can be updated.
- 6.6. The SRO must complete the declaration on the application form to confirm that the information provided to the Accreditations office is correct. The SRO may delegate the completion of the online application form to a designated individual.
- 6.7. The practice must submit all the requisite supporting documentation when applying for accreditation/reaccreditation. The requisite documentation is

set out in the application form. Failing to submit correct supporting documents may result in the application being rejected. Practices must provide sufficient details in the application form. Failing to supply sufficient details may result in the application form being rejected.

- 6.8. By completing the declaration, the SRO confirms that the practice complies with the obligations under the scheme.
- 6.9. Accredited practices may be assessed at any time during the course of their membership.

7. Assessment process

- 7.1. Once the application form has been submitted online, the application form and supporting documents will be assessed for compliance against the scheme standards.
- 7.2. Completed application forms cannot currently be downloaded directly from the platform. To obtain a copy, please request from the Accreditations office via cqs@lawsociety.org.uk.
- 7.3. The application form and supporting documentation will be assessed to ensure all the required information has been captured.
- 7.4. Information supplied will be verified through third party online credit and business reference services.
- 7.5. Information supplied will be assessed against a specialised CQS risk assessment scorecard.
- 7.6. Failing to supply full information or supporting documentation may:
 - 7.6.1. delay the processing and assessment of the application; and/or
 - 7.6.2. result in the application form being rejected.
- 7.7. The Accreditations office may either during the accreditation process or reaccreditation process require a practice to provide further information relating to (but not limited to):
 - 7.7.1. Information provided on the application form
 - 7.7.2. Information provided in the supporting documents
 - 7.7.3. Compliance with the CQS Standards
- 7.8. Failure to comply with the Accreditations office's request for further information or the timeframe for providing further information may result in the practice's membership being suspended or withdrawn.

8. Outcomes

- 8.1. Accredited: Where the practice has met the standards of the scheme, the practice will be awarded accreditation or reaccreditation, whichever is applicable. The accreditation will last for a period of 12 months. The practice will be advised by way of email and provided with an e-Certificate and the CQS logo. A hardcopy Certificate can be provided on request. There is a fee payable for hardcopy Certificates.
- 8.2. Rejected: Where the practice has not met the standards of the scheme or has breached the scheme rules or failed to provide information to the Accreditations office or failed to meet the timeframes of the Accreditations office, the practice will not be eligible for accreditation and will receive a rejection outcome, setting out the reasons for the decision. Where an application has been rejected, the membership fee will be refunded. The Application fee is not refundable.
- 8.3. Revocation: Where an accredited practice has not met the standards of the scheme or has breached the scheme rules, the practice will not be eligible for reaccreditation and will receive a revocation outcome, setting out the reasons for the decision. Where a membership has been revoked, the membership fee will be refunded. The Application fee is not refundable.
- 8.4. The Accreditations office reserves the right to revoke membership at any time for any reasonable reason. Revocation will result in practice being removed from the lender feed. Reasons shall include (but not be limited to):
 - any breach of the scheme rules or any breach by the SRO of any obligations set out in scheme rules which are not remedied (if capable of remedy) within 14 days of being required by written notice to do so;
 - actions or omissions by either the practice or any of the relevant which, in the reasonable opinion of the Accreditations office, could be detrimental to the reputation and integrity of the CQS and its brand;
 - the ongoing membership of the Practice poses an unacceptable level of risk to CQS;
 - the practice no longer meets the minimum standard required by the specialised CQS risk assessment scorecard;
 - any failure to co-operate with requests for information by the Accreditations office during the period of membership; or
 - failing to undertake corrective action as required by the Accreditations office following an assessment carried out either remotely or onsite.

9. Appeals

- 9.1. A practice may appeal a decision of the Accreditations office in line with the accreditation appeal policy.

- 9.2. An appeal must be made within 28 days of the date of the written notification from the Accreditations office. Reasons for the appeal should be detailed and written submissions and relevant documentary evidence should be provided for the consideration of the Accreditation Appeal Panel.
- 9.3. All appeals should be accompanied with payment of the appeal fee.

10. Duration

- 10.1. Membership of the scheme will commence on the date of notification that a practice is awarded entry into the accreditation scheme. The practice must ensure that the standards of the accreditation are maintained throughout the course of their membership. The accreditation is for a period of 12 months, after which date renewal by way of reaccreditation is required.
- 10.2. Practices must submit their application prior to their accreditation expiring. Failing to apply for reaccreditation in time will result in automatic withdrawal of membership. Where membership has been withdrawn, the practice will need to reapply as if it was an initial application.
- 10.3. While reminder emails from the Accreditations office are important for notifying you of upcoming deadlines, it remains the sole responsibility of the SRO to ensure that the application is submitted on time. The SRO and the practice cannot rely solely on these reminders. Failure to submit on time will result in the accreditation lapsing.
- 10.4. Lender Panels will be notified when a practice has been withdrawn or if the accreditation has lapsed.

11. Cost of the accreditation

- 11.1. The Practice shall pay the Law Society an application fee and a membership fee. All fees can be found on our website. Fees may be updated from time to time.

12. Use of logo

- 12.1. The scheme membership permits the accredited practice to use the CQS logo solely in connection with its Residential Conveyancing Practice on all marketing/promotional material, signage, stationery and website, provided that: the logo is used in the form stipulated by the Law Society and in accordance with the Law Society's branding policy; and use is in keeping with and maintains the integrity of the CQS and Law Society brands.
- 12.2. The practice shall not use the CQS logo in any way that would bring the CQS and its brand or the Law Society into disrepute or undermine their reputation.
- 12.3. The Member Practice may only use the CQS logo for the duration of the period of accreditation.

13. Complaints

- 13.1. Practices may submit a complaint about another CQS accredited practice where there is an identifiable non-compliance with the CQS standards. Complaints should be submitted in writing to CQS@LawSociety.org.uk .
- 13.2. On receipt of intelligence about the actions of a CQS accredited practice we review the matter alongside all the other information we hold about the practice or individual and may conduct an audit against the practice. This may also include a review of client files.
- 13.3. Although the Accreditations office is unable to adjudicate or provide advice on individual transactions, we can consider any allegations of breach of the CQS standards and decide whether appropriate action should be taken against the practice.
- 13.4. For service-related complaints, members of the public should first be directed to the firm's internal complaints procedure. If unresolved, they may then contact the Legal Ombudsman.

14. Onsite assessments

- 14.1. Practices may be selected for an onsite or remote assessment. Practices selected must co-operate with the Accreditations office in line with the Onsite Assessment Guidance Notes.

15. Obligations

- 15.1. Once accredited the conduct of the practice and personnel must support and promote the integrity of the CQS and its brand as a mark of quality in the Residential Conveyancing market.
- 15.2. The SRO must:
 - Ensure Relevant Members of Staff undertake such mandatory training as required under the Scheme.
 - Ensure Relevant Members of Staff undertake the annual update training, which must be completed annually and prior to submitting the application for reaccreditation.
 - Ensure Relevant Members of Staff who join the Member Practice undertake the initial mandatory training prior to submitting the application for reaccreditation.
 - Ensure that proof of completing the mandatory training for all relevant modules is provided with the application form.
- 15.3. The SRO must:

- Report to the Accreditations office any revocation of Professional Indemnity Insurance cover immediately and no later than 14 days after the event in writing by email; and
- Report to the Accreditations office any breach reported to the SRA as soon as reasonably practical and report any regulatory investigations/proceedings within 14 days from the date that the practice becomes aware that the SRA are investigating, setting out full details including the most recent correspondence with the SRA in writing by email. This includes matters that arise whilst the practice's application is being considered by the Accreditations office.

15.4. The SRO must:

- Co-operate with assessments as required by the Accreditations office;
- Co-operate with any other administration requirements of the scheme as directed by the Accreditations office;
- Read, consider and distribute amongst relevant person updates and other information that may from time to time come from the Accreditations office.

15.5. The practice must:

- Treat as confidential information that which is expressly marked as such and disclosed to it by the Accreditations office.
- Consent to requisition data from HM Land Registry being shared with the Accreditations office.

16. Changes to the practice or relevant persons

16.1. The SRO must:

- Advise the Accreditations office of any changes to the contact details for the practice and/or the SRO;
- Report to the Accreditations office any merger when applying for reaccreditation. Should the merger take place between an accredited and non-accredited practice, the SRO must contact the Accreditations office to ensure that the practice is able to retain its accreditation status. In the event of a demerger please contact the Accreditations office as soon as possible.
- Report to the Accreditations office any change of the head office business entity as soon as possible to ensure continuity of the CQS accreditation award.
- Advise the Accreditations office of any changes to Relevant Persons when applying for reaccreditation.

17. Intellectual property

- 17.1. At all times all elements of the CQS brand including the website and CQS name and logo and all associated goodwill and derivatives are the property of the Law Society. Nothing in the grant of the accreditation shall be construed as transferring any ownership interest in such property to the practice.
- 17.2. The practice shall not during the period of their membership seek to or actually register, use or adopt any domain name, company name, trade name, trademark, logo or the like relating to the CQS, its brand or similar derivative.