

IOP Application Form Guidance Notes

OVERVIEW

Our role as the leading professional body for paralegals is to set standards and promote our members as professional paralegals.

We identify our members' qualifications and experience so that they can receive recognition on the Professional Paralegal Register (PPR) and apply for [Paralegal Practising Certificates](#) where appropriate.

Institute's membership grades are designed to give your clients, other legal practitioners and the judiciary an indication of how experienced you are as a legal professional. Therefore, our membership grades are based upon how much legal practice experience (LPE) you have and what legal qualifications you have.

BENEFITS OF IOP MEMBERSHIP

- Free webinars to count towards your CPD – coming soon
- Discounts on numerous goods and services
- IoP Professional Designation i.e. F.Inst.Pa
- Annual Hallmarked Membership Certificate.
- Free daily e-news legal updates from Lexology
- Free monthly e-newsletter with a circulation of over 4000 subscribers
- Access to our paralegal forum on LinkedIn, which counts over 2000 members
- Eligibility to become a registered and/or regulated member of the Professional Paralegal Register
- Free affiliate membership with the New York City Paralegal Association
- Discounted membership with the Royal Over-Seas League
- Confirmed right to countersign passports
- Access to LawCare
- Smart badge for your website in partnership with Yoshki
- Early bird discounts to the annual Paralegal conference, organised by the Professional Paralegal Register

Process in a nutshell

1. Send in an application form
2. Complete the application form, supported by copies of relevant documents
3. Assessment stage- the Head of Membership will assess your application - the extent to which it aligns to IOP standards
4. May be approved or amendments required. If rejected - you can re-submit or appeal
5. Annual renewal - on the renewal date, each year, you will be sent several renewal notices and asked to confirm that the standards have been maintained.
6. Upgrade – if you believe you are eligible for this, you have the possibility to apply by filling in an upgrade form and submitting it to us.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Stage 1 – Completing your Application

To complete your application, you should answer the questions on the form as fully and truthfully as possible. The member of the team allocated to review your submission will look for alignment with the IOP Standards. Your application must be supported by copies of relevant documents, which should be sent after submission to office@theiop.org.

Stage 2 – The Assessment

- a) Your completed application form will be sent to the Head of Membership who will assess your application by conducting the necessary due diligence.
- b) A follow-up email will be sent if necessary, to enable the Head of Membership to clarify any outstanding issues or to request more information where necessary.

Stage 3 – Assessment Decision

Once the Head of Membership has reviewed your application, they will be able to confirm your approval or to ask for further information.

Should your application be deemed by the Head of Membership not to meet the standards of IoP, you will be provided with feedback.

If your application is rejected, you may make a re-submission which will be treated in all respects as a new submission.

An applicant may appeal against a decision regarding his or her eligibility for membership of the Institute, in writing, to the Chief Executive, within thirty days of being notified of a decision on his or her application. The appeal will be dealt with in accordance with the Institute's approved procedure.

Stage 4 – Annual Renewal

On your renewal date each year, you will be sent several renewal notices and will be asked to confirm that the standards recognised through your initial assessment have been maintained.

Assessment Criteria

The Head of Membership is looking to see the extent to which your legal practice experience and/or qualifications have a significant paralegal practice component which can be mapped to the IOP Standards. The nature of the evidence provided by each individual in support of his application and the way in which it is presented is likely to be different in each application, but as well as alignment to the IOP Standards, the Head of Membership will be looking that you are of good standing and will have regard to an applicant's antecedents and character.

For a summary of the IOP Competency Standards, please request a copy by e mailing us at office@theiop.org.

GUIDANCE IN COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

Section 1 – Your Personal Details

Please complete all parts of this section. It is essential that we hold these details on record so that we can communicate with you. Please make sure you update us on any changes relating to your personal details as soon as these happen, either via email or by filling in and submitting an “update your details” form.

Section 2 – Your Professional Details

Same as Section 1. Your professional details are those relevant to this application. If you practice law at work, then give us your work details. If you are applying because, for example, you are a part-time volunteer adviser, then please give us information about your advice work. If you are a student studying law, please use this section to tell us about what and where you are studying.

Section 3 – Your work/Practise Experience

In your own words, please give details of the actual practical experience you have (if any) which is relevant to your application.

You are required to give us as much information as possible about your LPE and to provide evidence to support your application. Suitable evidence might be one of the following: testimonials from clients or employer, reference letters from clients and/or employer, evidence of all qualifications with a legal element, a copy of your CV etc.

Supporting references for work experience:

All work experience claimed must be supported with references from employers. References must corroborate the work experience evidence provided.

References must be:

- written by a named person who could be contacted for verification if necessary, including your supervisor where your work was supervised;
- written for the purpose of this application; and
- written on letter headed paper or sent from professional email accounts, wherever possible.

The referees must be:

- previous or current employers.

The referees must not be personal friends or family members.

Please note, we will not write or chase referees for references. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide two references and the application may not be processed until complete references are received.

Reference letters need to be up to date, signed and on headed note paper as well as supporting the area/areas of law. Refer to membership requirements for number of years' experience you need to provide on our website.

N.B. WE WILL NOT START PROCESSING THE APPLICATION UNTIL WE HAVE RECEIVED SOME OR ALL OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS. Copies are not returned so please do not send originals. Copies do not have to be certified or in colour.

Section 4 - Your Legal Qualifications

Please list all legal qualifications that you have, or qualifications with a legal element and provide evidence of them, either by uploading them with your application or by emailing copies to us at office@theiop.org.

Section 5 – Fees and method of payment

Please see our [list of prices](#) and accepted methods of payment [here](#).

Section 6 – Additional questions

Please answer all the questions in this section.

Section 7 – Professional Paralegal Register

As a member of the Institute you will be eligible to appear on the PPR. This is a valuable benefit for our members who for just £25.00 pa can be seen by prospective clients and be contacted directly. For those members that are Tier 2 or above, you will also be able to apply for a PPR Practising Certificate and be fully regulated by the PPR, to include access to a compensation fund for your clients should things go wrong.

You can see more about the PPR at www.ppr.org.uk.

Our membership fees include the £25.00 fee for the PPR. You will receive a separate membership Tier Certificate from the PPR.

Section 8 - Your Character and Standing

Please provide information on the above if any is applicable to you.

Declaration as to conduct

Please sign this and submit to us.

PRICING

IoP Membership will last for one year. An initial, non-refundable assessment fee (administration fee) is paid when your assessment begins. The membership fee is paid annually on the anniversary of your initial approval. The renewal is subject to signed confirmation that you have maintained the standards of your initial approval. If, for any reason, IOP has reason to believe these standards have not been maintained, it reserves the right to re-assess your application.

Should your initial assessment not meet the criteria, subsequent applications will be treated as new submissions in each case.

Members based outside the UK seeking membership will be required to pay additional postage costs for us to send over a membership certificate.

MEMBERSHIP GRADES AVAILABLE

The IoP offers four levels of membership and Corporate membership for companies:

Affiliate - This grade is for new and aspiring paralegals who do not yet have a legal qualification and have none or very little work experience, or for anyone else who has an interest in a career in law.

Associate Paralegal (A.Inst.Pa) - Requires a level 3 qualification and/or has a minimum of one year's legal practice experience.

Qualified Paralegal (Q.Inst.Pa)- Requires a Level 6 qualification (Degree Level) AND has a minimum of 2 years legal practice experience (or experiential route).

Fellow of the IOP (F.Inst.Pa) - Requires a Level 6 qualification or above (Degree Level) AND has a minimum of 4 years legal practice experience (or experiential route)

Corporate Membership

Many organisations wish to demonstrate to their customers, suppliers and employees that they are committed to the highest standards of professional development. Corporate membership assesses an organisation's level of professionalism, providing confidence to all stakeholders of its dedication to offering the best services to consumers. For more information, please see our [Corporate Brochure](#).

FURTHER DETAILS

If you have any questions that these guidance notes have not addressed, please contact: office@theiop.org