

ASSOCIATION OF PERSONAL INJURY LAWYERS ACCREDITATION SCHEME AND STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

General guidance notes

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INTRODUCTION TO STANDARDS OF OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCE

Standards of occupational competence are widely used in many fields of employment. They are based on an analysis of the main functions of a job, and state what it is the job holder must be able to do to perform effectively. That analysis enables an identification of the knowledge, understanding, know-how, skill and behaviour required for effective performance.

A Standard is thus, primarily, a business tool. It enables a firm to specify what is required for the effective performance of a job. That specification can then be used as an aid to recruitment or promotion, but it is probably of greatest use in drafting a development plan for an individual who aspires to the role concerned, in appraising the performance of those who hold the role, and in identifying training needs.

Standards of occupational competence are used also as a means of setting the intended learning outcomes from training programmes, or for qualifications. They provide a benchmark against which personal accreditation of competence may be judged.

Claimant personal injury lawyers act for the victims of accidents, disease and injury, and seek to establish, assert and enforce their rights, in an effective and efficient manner, through negotiation, mediation or litigation. The range of cases, in terms of complexity and legal challenge, is very wide, ranging from minor road accidents to catastrophic multiple injuries, progressive industrial diseases and clinical negligence cases. Whilst financial remedies are important, rehabilitation of the injured person to restore them to as productive and independent a lifestyle as possible, through the use of medical, functional and vocational intervention, is also vital.

APIL ACCREDITED LEVELS

All APIL accredited members act for the victims of accidents, disease and injury and seek to establish, assert and enforce their rights through negotiation, mediation or litigation.

There are four levels of APIL accreditation:

Litigator

A Litigator works under supervision, may take cases to the point of negotiated settlement, but beyond the stage of issue of proceedings is likely to be subject to close guidance from a Senior Litigator. Litigators may work on both fast track and multi track cases, with many dealing predominantly with fast track matters.

Senior Litigator

A Senior Litigator is competent to identify liability, assess and manage risk, to be self-authorising at all key stages of litigation, and to lead and supervise the work of other PI lawyers.

Fellow

A Fellow is an experienced practitioner:

- who has a high level of technical expertise in personal injury law, including trial procedures;
- who is recognised by his or her peers as being in a position of professional and intellectual leadership in the field of personal injury law; and
- who is competent in the management of a personal injury department.

A Fellow meets all of the technical competences required for Senior Litigator status and, in all cases, has personal experience of trials on both liability and quantum.

Senior Fellow

Candidates for Senior Fellowship will have satisfied the requirements for all previous levels and are assessed by APIL's independent Senior Fellows Assessment Panel. There is therefore no application form for completion, nor verification, but candidates must submit a portfolio addressing specific criteria, along with four references from specified occupations or organisations.

CANDIDATES – HOW TO APPLY

Candidates should apply for accreditation by completing the Standard which best fits your knowledge, skill, understanding and experience of handling a personal injury caseload.

For candidates for Litigator and Senior Litigator status, there are differing requirements relating to knowledge, understanding, know-how and effective performance. Outcomes of effective performance are grouped into a number of units, depending on the level applied for. Against each element of each unit there is space for you to enter the name and/or reference number of a case in which you consider you demonstrated effective performance of that function or group of functions.

You do not need to maintain a separate collection of evidence. Whether you performed a function effectively should be apparent from the file. Your assessor should be able to decide, from the file, from his/her knowledge of your work, and from questioning you about what you did, whether you meet the Standard.

For Fellows, there are three parts to the Standard against which you must provide examples of evidence that you have satisfied the requirements.

PORTFOLIO

You should use your Portfolio to keep a running note of cases in which you consider there is evidence of effective performance of each function.

Should responsibility for your supervision pass to another member of your firm, the Standard should be completed as much as possible by your first assessor and then passed on to the new assessor.

Once your assessor is ready to make your final, overall judgement of whether you have met the requirements of the Standard, he/she should certify that you have satisfied all of the outcomes of effective performance within the Standard, have sufficient knowledge and understanding as determined within the Standard and has witnessed instances of display of the specified behaviours which underpin effective performance, finally confirming their recommendation of the award at that particular level.

GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENTS FOR LITIGATOR STATUS

1. Introduction

Litigator is a personal accreditation status awarded by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers. A candidate for Litigator status must demonstrate that they meet the Standard of Competence for Litigators. This will involve assessment against the Outcomes of Effective Performance contained within the Standard.

Assessment should be integrated with the normal supervision and management of a fee earner. There is not a separate assessment process, nor is there a requirement to assemble further evidence over and above completion of the Portfolio. Evidence of competent performance will come from the day to day work of the candidate. The judgements required to assess competence, for the purpose of achieving Litigator status, are the same judgements that a firm should be making in determining the level of supervision a fee earner requires, and the extent to which they are able to take certain steps in progressing a claim on their own authority.

The Standard, and this guidance, will help you take those decisions in a structured, reliable and defensible way, as well as enabling you to certify that a candidate meets the Standard for Litigator status.

2. Who can be an assessor?

An assessor should be a Senior Litigator of at least two years' standing, a Fellow or a Senior Fellow. The assessor should usually be responsible for supervising the work of the candidate. It is recognised that, with turnover of senior staff and the period of time necessary for full competence to be demonstrated, more than one person may act as assessor of a candidate. In such cases, each assessor should make it clear which units of the Standard they have assessed.

If a candidate works in a firm in which he or she is the only PI fee earner, application may be made to APIL for another member of the firm to act as assessor. Such a person should have comparable civil litigation experience to a Senior Litigator, and should be the person responsible for supervising the candidate.

If the person providing assistance, and acting as an assessor, is retired from practice, they should have been a Senior Litigator when in practice, or have had experience equivalent to that of a Senior Litigator.

Where an external assessor is appointed, all of the evidence required will still come from the files on which the candidate has worked, and from discussion with the candidate. Candidates should contact APIL to arrange an external assessor if required.

3. Evidence of competent performance

Where to find evidence

The Standard sets out the functions involved in progressing a personal injury claim, in a broadly sequential manner. It is divided into eight units, each dealing with a stage in the litigation process which might be handled by a Litigator. Each unit is sub-divided into elements addressing a function, or group of closely related functions. The primary evidence that a candidate has undertaken each function will come from the files for which they are responsible. The steps taken in progressing the matter should be self-evident from the file, in the form of attendance notes, correspondence, etc. It is because the evidence is largely on these files that no separate collection of evidence needs to be maintained. All that is required is completion of the tables under each function.

Evidence of effective performance should arise naturally from the work of the candidate and supervision of that work by the assessor. Evidence will almost always come from a candidate being assessed in the normal course of their work. In relation to each function, you need to be satisfied that the candidate has carried it out, has done so properly, and has done so consistently. You are looking for more than a single example that a function has been properly undertaken, you are looking for consistent performance over a period of time, and in a sufficient number of cases to make it likely that most of the problems and challenges which can arise have been encountered and dealt with.

Opportunities for evidence to arise include the general discussion of the progress of cases that is a normal part of the relationship between fee earner and supervisor; from formal reviews of files, either at key stages of litigation or through random file review; from annual or other appraisal of performance; and from observation of how the

fee earner manages the relationships involved in progressing a case. An assessor might wish to observe the candidate conducting a client interview or conference with counsel.

Whilst some Litigators may handle some aspects of certain multi-track cases, it is acceptable for evidence to come wholly from the handling of fast-track cases. It is desirable that evidence should come from more than one type of case (e.g. employer's liability, public liability, industrial disease, etc). It is recognised that some firms specialise in a single type of personal injury case (e.g. clinical negligence, road traffic accidents, etc.), or within a department, a person working towards Litigator status may be engaged on a single type of work. In such cases evidence can come from that type of work alone, but must demonstrate full competence across all of the functions.

Knowledge, understanding and know-how

You need to be satisfied not only that the function has been undertaken, but that it was done properly. It is important to ensure that the candidate understood what they were doing and why, and did not just happen to do the right thing by luck. You can establish this by discussing the case with the candidate, and questioning them as to why they took, or propose to take, a particular course of action. This is no different to the discussion you would expect to have anyway with a fee earner when discussing a case with them, or reviewing one of their files. This type of questioning allows you to satisfy yourself that the candidate has the necessary knowledge, understanding and know-how to enable them to operate properly, and to deal with the unusual or unexpected.

Assessing particular types of function

There are some types of function which recur throughout the Standard, and a broadly consistent approach should be taken to assessing whether the candidate has demonstrated competence in them:

- At several points in the Standard, the candidate has to review the case so as to advise the client, or decide on the next step to be taken. Examples are at 3a, 3b, 4g, 4k, 5h, and 5i. In determining whether the Standard is met, you will need to consider whether the candidate has assembled all necessary and relevant evidence, applied the relevant law to the facts, and identified and made appropriate use of any relevant precedents. Your evidence would come from the file (probably from letters sent to the client, instructions sent to counsel, revisions to the case plan) and from discussion of a case in the normal course of supervision.
- At several points in the Standard, the candidate has to decide whether or when to take a particular course of action. Examples are at 3g, 5f, 5g, and 7a. In respect of each of these you need to consider how the candidate reached, or proposes to reach their decision. Have they fully considered the advantages and disadvantages of the available courses of action, in relation to the law, the evidence, and the wishes of the client, and then selected the course of action most likely to secure the best possible outcome for the client? Your evidence would come from any note on the file of reasons for selecting a course of action, but predominantly from your discussion of cases with the candidate, in the normal course of supervision.
- At several points in the Standard the candidate is required to identify cases where particular action may be appropriate. Examples are at 3g, 4j, 5f, and 5g. In respect of these actions it is not expected that the candidate will necessarily have undertaken the action (as, if it were required, the file might then be assigned to a more senior fee earner), but candidates should be able to demonstrate an understanding of a course of action which might be available, and which should be considered as a way of progressing a case.

4. Satisfying the Standard

In relation to the elements under each unit of the Standard, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Do I have evidence that the candidate has carried out all of these functions satisfactorily, in relation to a reasonable number of cases, preferably over a range of types of case?***

If the answer to the question is "no", then the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with training, mentoring or guidance on carrying out the functions in questions, before a further assessment is made.

If the answer to the question is “yes”, then the assessor can certify the candidate as competent in relation to the elements of the unit in question. For the purpose of the final assessment, the assessor confirms competence in relation to each element of each unit, basing the decision on his or her record of the candidate’s performance in respect of each individual element.

There is no separate assessment of possession of knowledge and understanding, or of know-how. A person who lacked the necessary knowledge, understanding or know-how would be unable to carry out many of the listed functions satisfactorily. A weakness in knowledge, understanding or know-how might lead an assessor to the conclusion that they did not have evidence that the candidate had carried out the functions satisfactorily, or that they would not be willing to allow the candidate to work unsupervised. In that event, the candidate should be advised of the shortcoming, and it should be addressed through a training plan.

Whilst knowledge and understanding are assessed as a part of a holistic appraisal of performance against individual standards, overall assessment is more than the sum of the parts represented by the units of the Standard. Assessors must be satisfied that candidates have successfully integrated their learning from each of the units, and that this is evidenced from their overall handling of cases and their application of knowledge and understanding. Assessors should ask themselves:

- ***Am I satisfied that the candidate’s handling of cases demonstrates full possession of the knowledge and understanding required to meet the Standard?***
- ***Am I satisfied that the candidate has successfully integrated their ability to carry out each function covered by the Standard, and that this is demonstrated by effective overall case management?***

If the answer is “no”, the candidate is not yet fully competent, and the assessor should not sign the declaration at the end of the Portfolio that the candidate is competent. Deficiencies should be identified and explained to the candidate. Further experience will be required, together with a training plan to remedy and shortcomings in knowledge and understanding; as will guidance and mentoring on overall case management.

The behaviours which underpin effective performance should also be demonstrated in relation to relevant elements of the units of the Standard. However, assessors are asked additionally, to confirm that, from their observation of the candidate, they have seen evidence that all of the behaviours are displayed. To do this, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Can I point to instances where each of these behaviours has been displayed?***

If the answer is “no”, the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with guidance and mentoring on developing appropriate behaviours.

If the answer is “yes”, then the assessor can certify that the candidate demonstrates the required behaviours.

5. Using the Portfolio

Assessors should keep a record of the candidate’s progress. This can be done by completing the assessor’s part of the Outcomes of Effective Performance section of the Portfolio.

If you feel that a case handled by the candidate provides evidence that an element of the Standard has been fully met you should enter what you did to ascertain this (e.g. “reviewed file”, “discussed case”, “observed client interview”), the date and your initials. The Outcomes of Effective Performance section then enables you to:

- Identify any elements of the Standard in which evidence is lacking, enabling you then to allocate to the candidate cases which would provide the opportunity for competence to be demonstrated;
- Facilitate eventual completion of the Portfolio, which must be submitted to APIL when formal application for Litigator status is made;
- Pass on the record of the evidence you have assessed, should you cease to be the candidate’s supervisor;
- Have a record of your assessment decisions on file, should the decision in respect of your candidate be one of those reviewed as a part of the APIL quality assurance procedure.

No record beyond the Portfolio is needed as, if properly completed, it will point to where evidence exists on file. Where you have been satisfied, from your own observation (for example, of a client interview in relation to Unit 1), that an element of the Standard is satisfied, your comments in the Outcomes of Effective Performance section will be taken as conclusive evidence.

For reasons of client confidentiality the first column (cases providing evidence) should be anonymised before submitting a copy of the Portfolio to APIL, by deleting the case names or deleting the columns electronically. A copy of the original Portfolio must be retained by the firm.

6. Quality assuring assessment decisions

APIL will review a sample of assessment decisions, to ensure that the personal accreditation scheme remains credible. The review will usually consist of reviewing with the assessor the evidence on which they relied in making their judgements, making use of the Portfolio copy retained in-house. For this purpose, copies of Portfolios should be retained by the firm for a period of five years following the submission of the application for Litigator status. In common with all retrospective reviews of assessment decisions, this is a review of the assessment made, not of the candidate.

GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENTS FOR SENIOR LITIGATOR STATUS

1. Introduction

Senior Litigator is a personal accreditation status awarded by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers. A candidate for Senior Litigator status must demonstrate that they meet the Standard of Competence for Senior Litigators. This will involve assessment against the Outcomes of Effective Performance contained within the Standard.

Assessment should be integrated with the normal supervision and management of a fee earner. There is not a separate assessment process, nor is there a requirement to assemble further evidence over and above completion of the Portfolio. Evidence of competent performance will come from the day to day work of the candidate. The judgements required to assess competence, for the purpose of achieving Senior Litigator status, are the same judgements that a firm should be making in deciding on the extent to which a fee earner is ready to work unsupervised, to supervise the work of others, or to be self-authorising at key stages of litigation.

The Standard, and this guidance, will help you take those decisions in a structured, reliable and defensible way, as well as enabling you to certify that a candidate meets the Standard for Senior Litigator status.

2. Who can be an assessor?

An assessor should be an existing Senior Litigator of at least five years' standing, a Fellow or a Senior Fellow. The assessor should usually be responsible for supervising the work of the candidate. It is recognised that, with turnover of senior staff and the period of time necessary for full competence to be demonstrated, more than one person may act as assessor of a candidate. In such cases, each assessor should make it clear which units of the Standard they have assessed.

If a candidate works in a firm in which he or she is the only or the senior PI fee earner, application may be made to APIL for another member of the firm to act as assessor. Such a person should have comparable civil litigation experience to a Senior Litigator, and should be the person responsible for supervising the candidate.

If a candidate is a sole practitioner, application may be made to APIL for a Senior Litigator (or above) who assists the firm by conducting file reviews to act also as an assessor.

If the person providing assistance, and acting as an assessor, is retired from practice, they should have been a Senior Litigator when in practice, or have had experience equivalent to that of a Senior Litigator.

Where an external assessor is appointed, all of the evidence required will still come from the files on which the candidate has worked, and from discussion with the candidate. Candidates should contact APIL to arrange an external assessor if required.

3. Evidence of competent performance

Where to find evidence

The Standard sets out the functions involved in progressing a personal injury claim, in a broadly sequential manner. It is divided into eleven units, each dealing with a stage in the litigation process. Each unit is sub-divided into elements addressing a function, or group of closely related functions. The primary evidence that a candidate has undertaken each function will come from the files for which they are responsible. The steps taken in progressing the matter should be self-evident from the file, in the form of attendance notes, correspondence, etc. It is because the evidence is largely on these files that no separate collection of evidence needs to be maintained. All that is required is completion of the tables under each function.

Evidence of effective performance should arise naturally from the work of the candidate, and supervision of that work by the assessor. Evidence will almost always come from a candidate being assessed in the normal course of their work. In relation to each function, you need to be satisfied that the candidate has carried it out, has done so properly, and has done so consistently. Remember that the performance you are looking for is performance which would give you the confidence to entrust the candidate with the power to be self-authorising at key stages

in litigation, in respect of their own cases, and to be able to authorise others at those stages. This means that you are looking for more than a single example that a function has been properly undertaken, you are looking for consistent performance over a period of time, preferably over a range of types of case, and in a sufficient number of cases to make it likely that most of the problems and challenges which can arise have been encountered and dealt with.

Opportunities for evidence to arise include the general discussion of the progress of cases that is a normal part of the relationship between fee earner and supervisor; from formal reviews of files, either at key stages of litigation or through random file review; from annual or other appraisal of performance; and from observation of how the fee earner manages the relationships involved in progressing a case. An assessor might wish to observe the candidate conducting a client interview, conference with counsel, case management conference or joint settlement meeting. Opportunities for this might arise in relation to the more complex cases in which a supervisor might expect to have such an involvement anyway.

Assessment should not take place too soon. A fee earner is likely to be ready to be assessed against the Senior Litigator Standard once the firm is ready to consider granting the fee earner the authority to be self-authorising at key stages of litigation, in a range of more complex cases. This point is unlikely to be reached before a fee earner has at least five years' experience of personal injury cases. On the other hand, early opportunities to demonstrate competence in relation to matters which arise less frequently should not be missed. Candidates should use the Portfolio to record the name and file reference of a matter which enabled them to demonstrate competence in relation to a function.

Evidence **must** come wholly or mainly from the handling of multi-track cases. Fast track cases do not, in general, generate evidence of competence at the level required for a Senior Litigator. It is desirable that evidence should come from more than one type of case (e.g. employer's liability, public liability, industrial disease, etc). It is recognised that some firms specialise in a single type of personal injury case (e.g. clinical negligence, road traffic accidents, etc.). In such cases evidence can come from that type of work alone, but must demonstrate full competence across all of the functions.

Knowledge, understanding and know-how

You need to be satisfied not only that the function has been undertaken, but that it was done properly. It is important to ensure that the candidate understood what they were doing and why, and did not just happen to do the right thing by luck. You can establish this by discussing the case with the candidate, and questioning them as to why they took, or propose to take, a particular course of action. This is no different to the discussion you would expect to have anyway with a fee earner when discussing a case with them, or reviewing one of their files. This type of questioning allows you to satisfy yourself that the candidate has the necessary knowledge, understanding and know-how to enable them to operate properly, and to deal with the unusual or unexpected.

Assessing particular types of function

There are some types of function which recur throughout the Standard, and a broadly consistent approach should be taken to assessing whether the candidate has demonstrated competence in them:

- At several points in the Standard, the candidate has to review the case so as to advise the client, or decide on the next step to be taken. Examples are at 3a, 3b, 4g, 4k, 5j, 6a, 9f and 10a. In determining whether the Standard is met, you will need to consider whether the candidate has assembled all necessary and relevant evidence, applied the relevant law to the facts, and identified and made appropriate use of any relevant precedents. Your evidence would come from the file (probably from letters sent to the client, instructions sent to counsel, revisions to the case plan) and from discussion of a case in the normal course of supervision.
- At several points in the Standard, the candidate has to decide whether or when to take a particular course of action. Examples are at 3g, 3h, 3i, 5b (in relation to Part 36 offers) 5f, 5h, 6a, 6n, 6p, 9a, and 10d. In respect of each of these you need to consider how the candidate reached, or proposes to reach their decision. Have they fully considered the advantages and disadvantages of the available courses of action, in relation to the law, the evidence, and the wishes of the client, and then selected the course of action most likely to secure the best possible outcome for the client? Your evidence would come from any note on the file of reasons for selecting a course of action, but predominantly from your discussion of

cases with the candidate, in the normal course of supervision. In making your judgement, remember that there may be more than one appropriate course of action. The test is not whether the candidate has selected the course of action that you would have chosen yourself, but that the decision or proposal was reached through a sound process of reasoning based on the law, the evidence and the client's interests. It is soundness of reasoning which will give you the confidence that the candidate is ready to work unsupervised, and which will demonstrate that the Standard is met.

- At several points in the Standard, the candidate has to progress a matter through a case conference or other meeting. Examples are at 5g and 6q. The best evidence of effective performance in a meeting comes from observation of the performance of the candidate in the meeting itself. This can be gained from cases in respect of which you would wish, as the supervisor, to accompany the candidate at a meeting anyway. You should satisfy yourself, in preparatory discussion, that the candidate has a clear view of the outcome they wish to achieve from the meeting, that such an outcome is appropriate and realistic, and that the likely reactions of other parties to the meeting have been anticipated and contingency responses prepared. In the meeting itself you should assess the effectiveness and clarity of presentation by the candidate, and effectiveness of judgement by the candidate in relation to such things as responses to points raised (both foreseen and unforeseen) and decisions as to whether to press a matter to a conclusion or to seek adjournment.
- At several points in the Standard the candidate is required to identify cases where particular action may be appropriate. Examples are at 3g, 3h, 3i, 4j, 5b (in relation to Part 36 offers), 5f, 5h, 6m, 6p, 10c, 10d, and 11l. In respect of these actions it is not enough that the candidate should be aware that they are available. In general, to demonstrate full competence, the candidate should have handled successfully cases in which the action specified for consideration was actually carried out.

4. What can you do if evidence is not available?

The Standard sets out functions that every Senior Litigator ought to be able to carry out competently. In general, evidence ought to be available in relation to every element of every unit, to demonstrate an all-round ability which enables the Senior Litigator to deal with the full range of issues which may arise in the course of the practice of personal injury law.

However, there are two circumstances in which a different approach may be considered.

First, given that very few personal injury cases now go to court, it may be difficult for some candidates to present direct evidence in respect of some elements of Units 10 and 11 of the Standard, dealing with the management of trial and post-trial procedures. The candidate must have demonstrated their ability to handle all of the pre-court procedures listed under Unit 10. However, if the candidate has never had a case which went to court, a covering note to the application should set out what steps have been taken by the candidate to ensure they are fully familiar with the court process. These steps should include attendance at appropriate training events, and must always include having attended court, on one or more occasions, with a fellow lawyer to observe the court proceedings in a civil litigation matter and to discuss, with the lawyer having carriage of the case, the way in which it was conducted. The assessor should seek confirmation from the lawyer so observed that, in the opinion of that lawyer, the candidate would be capable handling the trial procedures competently. The elements which may be addressed in this way are 10f, 10g, 10h, 10i, 10j, 10k, 10m, 10n, 10p, 11a, 11b and 11c.

Second, in some types of practice the opportunity to deal with some of the functions contained in the Standard may arise infrequently, or not at all. It would not be reasonable to deny Senior Litigator status because a function which arises relatively infrequently in practice had not been experienced.

Such functions fall in to two categories. The first comprises those which are genuinely uncommon, or which are unlikely to arise in certain fields of practice. This category includes such things as acting for a minor, in a fatal claim, for or against a bankrupt, or seeking provisional damages or periodical payments. The second category is matters which may not be encountered because of a policy of the firm to conduct business in a particular way, for example by never making use of mediation, or always instructing counsel to draft Particulars of Claim.

It is preferable that candidates should demonstrate their competence in relation to these matters through the handling of actual cases. So, it would not be acceptable for a candidate never to have drafted particulars of claim if the opportunity to do so had been present, and the candidate had simply preferred to pass the matter to

counsel. However, if the firm had a policy of such drafting always being undertaken by counsel, it would be unreasonable to deny the candidate access to Senior Litigator status as a consequence.

Where a candidate has not had the opportunity to gain personal experience of a less common function, and to demonstrate competence in its discharge, they should attend a training event or events covering the function(s), and the supervisor/assessor should satisfy themselves, through discussion with the candidate following the training event, that the candidate would be fully capable of discharging the function, should the need arise. A reasonable period of time should be allowed to provide opportunities for less common functions to be undertaken to arise. As such, performance in relation to an element may only be assessed other than by actually discharging the function if the candidate has at least 6 years' experience of personal injury litigation, and no opportunity to undertake the function has arisen in that time.

To ensure that eligibility for Senior Litigator status remains based largely upon demonstrated competence in practice, the following are the only elements which may be dealt with in this way:

- 1h (acting for a minor or client lacking capacity)
- 1i (acting in a fatal claim)
- 3h (seeking a provisional damages award)
- 3i (seeking periodical payments)
- 5h (using mediation)
- 6c (drafting Particulars of Claim) and 8a (drafting skeleton arguments and pleadings only)
- 6h (acting for or against a bankrupt)

From time to time APIL and other training providers offer accredited courses dealing with:

- Managing trial and post-trial procedures
- Less common procedures in PI

These courses are designed to meet the needs of candidates for Senior Litigator status. It is not necessary to wait until 6 years' experience has been gained before attending such a course, as the courses have value in preparing a candidate for dealing with a less common procedure, should one arise.

5. Satisfying the Standard

In relation to the elements under each unit of the Standard, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Do I have evidence that the candidate has carried out all of these functions satisfactorily, in relation to a reasonable number of multi-track cases, preferably over a range of types of case?***
- ***Would I be content for the candidate to perform these functions unsupervised?***
- ***Would I be content for the candidate to supervise and guide other fee earners undertaking these functions?***
- ***Would I be content for the candidate to be self-authorising at any key stage of litigation contained within these functions?***
- ***Would I be content for the candidate to authorise other fee earners to proceed at any key stages of litigation contained within these functions?***

If the answer to any of these questions is "no", then the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with training, mentoring or guidance on carrying out the functions in questions, before a further assessment is made.

If the answer to all of these questions is "yes", then the assessor can certify the candidate as competent in relation to the elements of the unit in question. For the purpose of the final assessment, the assessor confirms competence in relation to each element of each unit, basing the decision on his or her record of the candidate's performance in respect of each individual element.

There is no separate assessment of possession of knowledge and understanding, or of know-how. A person who lacked the necessary knowledge, understanding or know-how would be unable to carry out many of the listed functions satisfactorily. A weakness in knowledge, understanding or know-how might lead an assessor to the conclusion that they did not have evidence that the candidate had carried out the functions satisfactorily, or that they would not be willing to allow the candidate to work unsupervised. In that event, the candidate should be advised of the shortcoming, and it should be addressed through a training plan.

Whilst knowledge and understanding are assessed as a part of a holistic appraisal of performance against individual standards, overall assessment is more than the sum of the parts represented by the units of the Standard. Assessors must be satisfied that candidates have successfully integrated their learning from each of the units, and that this is evidenced from their overall handling of cases and their application of knowledge and understanding. Assessors should ask themselves:

- ***Am I satisfied that the candidate's handling of cases demonstrates full possession of the knowledge and understanding required to meet the Standard?***
- ***Am I satisfied that the candidate has successfully integrated their ability to carry out each function covered by the Standard, and that this is demonstrated by effective overall case management?***

If the answer is "no", the candidate is not yet fully competent, and the assessor should not sign the declaration at the end of the Portfolio that the candidate is competent. Deficiencies should be identified and explained to the candidate. Further experience will be required, together with a training plan to remedy and shortcomings in knowledge and understanding; as will guidance and mentoring on overall case management.

The behaviours which underpin effective performance should also be demonstrated in relation to relevant elements of the units of the Standard. However, assessors are asked additionally, to confirm that, from their observation of the candidate, they have seen evidence that all of the behaviours are displayed. To do this, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Can I point to instances where each of these behaviours has been displayed?***

If the answer is "no", the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with guidance and mentoring on developing appropriate behaviours.

If the answer is "yes", then the assessor can certify that the candidate demonstrates the required behaviours.

6. Using the Portfolio

Assessors should keep a record of the candidate's progress. This can be done by completing the assessor's part of the Outcomes of Effective Performance section of the Portfolio.

If you feel that a case handled by the candidate provides evidence that an element of the Standard has been fully met you should enter what you did to ascertain this (e.g. "reviewed file", "discussed case", "observed client interview"), the date and your initials.

In relation to trial procedures, if the candidate has not had personal carriage of a matter at trial you should enter "discussed trial attended". Similarly, if the candidate is relying on a training course in respect of one or more less common procedures, you should enter "discussed course attended". The Outcomes of Effective Performance section then enables you to:

- Identify any elements of the Standard in which evidence is lacking, enabling you then to allocate to the candidate cases which would provide the opportunity for competence to be demonstrated;
- Facilitate eventual completion of the Portfolio, which must be submitted to APIL when formal application for Senior Litigator status is made;
- Pass on the record of the evidence you have assessed, should you cease to be the candidate's supervisor;
- Have a record of your assessment decisions on file, should the decision in respect of your candidate be one of those reviewed as a part of the APIL quality assurance procedure.

No record beyond the Portfolio is needed as, if properly completed, it will point to where evidence exists on file. Where you have been satisfied, from your own observation (for example, of a client interview in relation to Unit 1), that an element of the Standard is satisfied, your comments in the Outcomes of Effective Performance section will be taken as conclusive evidence.

For reasons of client confidentiality the first column (cases providing evidence) should be anonymised before submitting a copy of the Portfolio to APIL, by deleting the case names or deleting the columns electronically. A copy of the original Portfolio must be retained by the firm.

7. Quality assuring assessment decisions

APIL will review a sample of assessment decisions, to ensure that the personal accreditation scheme remains credible. The review will usually consist of reviewing with the assessor the evidence on which they relied in making their judgements, making use of the Portfolio copy retained in-house. For this purpose, copies of Portfolios should be retained by the firm for a period of five years following the submission of the application for Senior Litigator status. In common with all retrospective reviews of assessment decisions, this is a review of the assessment made, not of the candidate.

GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENTS FOR FELLOW STATUS

1. Introduction

Fellow is a personal accreditation status awarded by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers. A candidate for Fellow status must demonstrate that they meet the Standard of Competence for Fellows. This will involve assessment against the Outcomes of Effective Performance contained within Parts 1 and 2 of the Standard, and a peer reference in respect of Part 3.

Assessment of Parts 1 and 2 should be integrated with the normal supervision and management of the candidate. There is not a separate assessment process, nor is there a requirement to assemble further evidence over and above completion of the Portfolio. Evidence of competent performance will come from the day to day work of the candidate.

2. Who can be an assessor?

Candidates for Fellow status will be, typically, heads of personal injury departments, or very senior fee earners within such departments. They will be exercising management responsibility for the PI practice within their firm. As such, the assessor for Parts 1 and 2 of the Standard should usually be the Senior Partner or Managing Partner (or equivalent) of the firm.

Evidence that the candidate meets the requirements of Part 3 of the Standard should take the form of a structured reference from a personal injury lawyer from outside the firm who is a Fellow of at least five years' standing, or is a Senior Fellow.

Where an external assessor is appointed, all of the evidence required will still come from the files on which the candidate has worked, and from discussion with the candidate. Candidates should contact APIL to arrange an external assessor if required.

3. Evidence of competent performance

PART 1

The candidate will already have demonstrated their capability to undertake the drafting and trial management competences of this Part in the course of gaining Senior Litigator status. However, they may not have had the opportunity, at that stage, of gaining personal experience of the tasks listed.

In respect of the drafting of Particulars of Claim, skeleton arguments and pleadings, evidence of competent performance of these tasks may have been provided in the course of assessment for Senior Litigator status. In that event, no further evidence is required. If such drafting is usually put out to counsel, such that the candidate had no direct experience of drafting at the time they obtained Senior Litigator status, then the candidate should produce a number of examples of drafting they have produced personally.

In respect of the elements of competence relating to managing the trial process, if assessment for Senior Litigator status involved direct evidence of managing trials, then no further evidence is required. If Senior Litigator status was gained with the trial elements of the Standard being satisfied by attendance on courses and trial observation, then evidence is required that the candidate has taken cases to trial, on both liability and quantum, and has demonstrated that all elements of the Standard have been met.

Evidence of effective performance of these tasks should arise naturally from the work of the candidate. In relation to each function, you need to be satisfied that the candidate has carried it out, has done so properly, and has done so consistently. This means that you are looking for more than a single example that a function has been properly undertaken, you are looking for consistent performance over a period of time, preferably over a range of types of case, and in a sufficient number of cases to make it likely that most of the problems and challenges which can arise have been encountered and dealt with.

PART 2

This Part is about the management of the PI practice of a firm.

In relation to each of the elements of the four units, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Do I have evidence that the candidate has carried out all of these functions satisfactorily?***

In relation to the Part as a whole, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Does the candidate manages his/her department successfully, and in a manner which requires minimal intervention by myself?***
- ***Does the candidate contribute effectively to firm-wide discussions of budget, marketing, strategy and human resource management?***

If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, then the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with training, mentoring or guidance on carrying out the functions in questions, before a further assessment is made. The latter two questions reflect the reality that effective management is more than just the sum of the competent discharge of a number of functions. These two questions invite a more holistic view of the effectiveness of the candidate as a manager, and of the contribution made to the running of the firm as a whole.

If the answer to all of these questions is “yes”, then the assessor can certify the candidate as competent in relation to this Part of the Standard.

Evidence to support your judgement may come from such things as departmental procedure manuals, budgets and operational plans prepared by the candidate; your observation of the candidate’s contribution to the firm’s overall strategies, budgets and marketing plans; outcomes of 360 degree appraisal; and your own observation of the way in which the department or team is managed.

The behaviours which underpin effective performance should also be demonstrated in relation to relevant elements of the units of this Part of the Standard. However, assessors are asked additionally, to confirm that, from their observation of the candidate, they have seen evidence that all of the behaviours are displayed. To do this, the assessor should ask themselves:

- ***Can I point to instances where each of these behaviours has been displayed?***

If the answer is “no”, the candidate is not yet fully competent. Further experience will be required, together with guidance and mentoring on developing appropriate behaviours.

If the answer is “yes”, then the assessor can certify that the candidate demonstrates the required behaviours.

PART 3 - REFERENCE

This part of the Standard is about the standing of the candidate as a person providing professional and intellectual leadership in the practice of personal injury law. Evidence of this comes from peers who are themselves regarded as leaders in the field, and takes the form of a structured reference which confirms that the candidate meets the expectations of sections i) (sharing expertise) and ii) (leading litigation) of the Part.

The person providing the reference should be from outside the firm from which the candidate comes, and should be a Fellow of at least five years’ standing or a Senior Fellow.

Exceptionally, a person accepted by APIL as being of comparable standing and experience in personal injury law may be used as a referee. However, if it is proposed that a member of counsel should be a referee, such counsel should not be a member of chambers instructed regularly by the candidate.

Professional and intellectual leadership may be demonstrated through the sharing of expertise and leadership of more complex and difficult cases.

Part 3 of the Standard is as follows:

i) *Sharing expertise*

To meet the Standard you must demonstrate a practical commitment to sharing knowledge, know-how and expertise, within your firm and in the profession more widely, so as to help build the overall competence and professionalism of the practice of personal injury law. Evidence is likely to come from:

- *Lecturing, conducting seminars or webinars, and other direct teaching;*
- *Publication of articles in legal journals, in general publications explaining aspects of PI law to a lay audience, in text books or other learning materials, of submissions to commissions or other public bodies on PI law;*
- *Development of the precedent systems of a firm.*

ii) *Leading litigation*

To meet the Standard you must demonstrate that you function as a leader in the field of personal injury law. You should be able to show that:

- *you deal personally with the more difficult cases which present new or unusual problems;*
- *you are consulted for your depth of specialist expertise by practitioners who are themselves of established standing the field;*
- *you undertake work on referral from other firms or less experienced colleagues;*
- *you undertake risk analysis and risk management in relation to complex cases, which may include multi-party cases.*

A reference should show how the candidate meets the expectations of the Standard. A reference is not a box ticking exercise, but an evaluation of the candidate's professional contribution to personal injury law. As such, examples of achievement which go beyond or offer an alternative to the letter of the Standard are welcome.

References, in letter form, should be sent to:

Membership and accreditation services
Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL)
3 Alder Court
Rennie Hogg Road
Nottingham NG2 1RX
DX 716208 Nottingham 42 T: 0115 958 0585 E: mail@apil.org.uk

4. Using the Portfolio

The assessor and the candidate should each keep a record of the candidate's progress. In relation to Parts 1 and 2 this can be done by completing the relevant sections of the Portfolio.

In relation to Part 3 the candidate may wish to keep a note of activities undertaken which provide evidence that the Standard is met, with a view to discussing these with the person they nominate as their referee.

The Portfolio is the document which must be submitted to APIL in support of an application for Fellow status. For reasons of client confidentiality, in **Part 1** of the Standard **only**, the first column (cases providing evidence) should be anonymised before submitting a copy of the Portfolio to APIL, by deleting the case names or deleting the columns electronically. A copy of the original Portfolio must be retained by the firm.

5. Quality assuring assessment decisions

APIL will review a sample of assessment decisions, to ensure that the personal accreditation scheme remains credible. The review will usually consist of reviewing with the assessor the evidence on which they relied in making their judgements, making use of the Portfolio copy retained in-house. For this purpose, copies of Portfolios should be retained by the firm for a period of five years following the submission of the application for Fellow status. In common with all retrospective reviews of assessment decisions, this is a review of the assessment made, not of the candidate.