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BOARD WELCOMES COMMON BEST PRACTICE CODE FOR HIGH-QUALITY INTERNSHIPS

The Legal Services Board (LSB) has today welcomed the publication of the Common Best Practice Code for High Quality Internships. This publication has been developed through the Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum, of which the Board is a member.

The pursuit of interventions which support social mobility is a key part of the Board's agenda for increasing diversity in the legal services workforce. The Board has indicated its endorsement for the view that fair access to internships is an important element of the drive to ensure that careers in the legal profession are open to the widest possible pool of talent.

The importance of work experience for students is that it can play an important role in leading on to more formal vacation schemes, which are often an integral part of firms' graduate recruitment activities.

Legal Services Board Chief Executive Chris Kenny said:

"It is crucial that access to these opportunities is not based on personal connections but on a transparent and fair recruitment process. It is equally important that internships carry with them appropriate remuneration, so that they are not just the preserve of those who can afford to work for nothing. We encourage approved regulators and professional bodies to adopt the code and promote it among their regulated communities."

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Notes for editors:

1. The [published code](#) can be found online today.
2. The LSB has [written](#) to approved regulators in the legal services sector to ask them to give effect to the provisions of the code.
3. The importance of internships is backed by research (Shiner, M and Newburn, T (1995)) which suggests that having secured legal work experience is an important factor in gaining entry to the profession. The findings demonstrate that having undertaken relevant experience significantly increases the chances of being offered a training contract (one study showed 63% of those who had carried out vacation work being offered a contract in comparison to 43% of those who had not carried out work experience).
4. There is significant evidence suggesting that access to work experience varies according socio-economic background. Recent research by Dr Andrew Francis from Keele University and Professor Hilary Sommerlad from the University of Leicester (Francis, A and Sommerlad, H (2010)) highlighted that students with connections with the profession through either family or friends were twice as likely to have secured work experience at an early stage (academic year 10/11) than those without such connections. Those students whose fathers worked in 'routine and semi-routine occupations' were less likely than their counterparts to have undertaken informal work experience.
5. The Legal Services Act ("The Act") created the Legal Services Board as a new regulator with responsibility for overseeing the regulation of legal services in England and Wales. The new regulatory regime became active on 1 January 2010.
6. The LSB oversees eight Approved Regulators, which in turn regulate individual lawyers. The Approved Regulators, designated under Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the 2007 Act, are the Law Society, the Bar Council, the Master of the Faculties, the Institute of Legal Executives, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys, the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys and the Association of Costs Lawyers.
7. In addition, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants are listed as Approved Regulators in relation only to reserved probate activities.
8. The legal profession currently consists of some 15,000 barristers, 119,000 solicitors and 12,000 individuals operating in other aspects of the legal profession such as conveyancing. The sector is currently valued at £24.74 billion per annum (total turnover in 2009).