



CILEX Paralegal Experience Assessment Route

Employer Guidance

1. CILEX

The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) is the professional association for CILEX Lawyers (Chartered Legal Executives), Paralegals and other legal practitioners in England and Wales. Offering unparalleled access to a flexible career in law and recognition alongside solicitors and barristers. We set high professional and ethical standards and drive greater diversity in the professional. Find out more about CILEX on our website www.CILEX.org.uk

This handbook is designed for employers to understand what is required of an employee when applying to CILEX via 'APEL' – the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, otherwise known as the CILEX Experience Assessment Route.

2. CILEX Experience Route

CILEX Experience Assessment is a route to achieving CILEX Paralegal membership without completing CILEX or other legal qualifications. The route assesses professional competence.

To be eligible to apply for experience assessment employees must meet the minimum years of experience, including working in the law of England and Wales, and they should be able to demonstrate recent application of the duties and behaviours required by CILEX.

Why have recognition from CILEX as a Paralegal?

Benefits for employers

This new route to CILEX membership has been shaped extensively by feedback from employers who do not have a way to recognise the significant role played by staff who do not hold formal legal qualifications. This will allow employers to:

- reward and retain talent (reducing workforce turnover cost)
- build talented and diverse teams that meet the needs of clients
- become the employer of choice and attract the best individuals
- demonstrate greater transparency and reduce their risk.

Benefits for individuals

For the individuals who join CILEX via the experience route, the benefits are clear:

- gain formal recognition of their skills and experience through professional standing and postnominal designations.
- career development and progression.
- offer transparency and reassurance to clients and colleagues through visibility on a public register of paralegals.
- join a community of fellow professionals offering peer networking and support.

Eligibility

Paralegal applicants using the Experience Assessment Route must have a minimum of 2 years' legal experience. This experience must have been gained in the last 5 years and based on the law of England and Wales.

What can a CILEX Paralegal member do?

A CILEX Paralegal is typically a case handler or legal assistant who operates effectively under the appropriate level of supervision. They are able to support a legal team; work with internal and external clients to understand their needs, obtain the necessary information and/or instructions and identify what is required to move the matter forward. They will also conduct legal research and present clear next steps, recommendations and solutions, both written and orally. They can demonstrate problem solving skills, undertake straightforward tasks on legal matters e.g., preparing client care documentation, case outlines and reviews, court submissions and complete standard documents within their area of practice referring to the appropriate legal expert for more technical legal advice and case management.

Prioritising their time, a CILEX Paralegal reliably completes work to high professional standards, applying the CILEX Code of Conduct appropriately; including, but not limited to, conducting due diligence, maintaining confidentiality, recognising conflicts of interest, escalating matters to, for example, the team leader when appropriate, keeping up to date with changes in the law, processes and the organisation's ways of working and consistently seeking to develop and upskill.

3. Assessing Experience

The CILEX Experience Assessment for Paralegal membership comprises of:

- an application form – the submission of narrative evidence against professional competences (experience).
- validation – the application must be validated by a referee, which is usually a legally qualified supervisor. If there is no suitable referee, the applicant will need to attend an interview with a CILEX assessor.

The assessment period starts when the Experience Assessment has been purchased and the application form has been issued to the applicant. The assessment window will be open for a period of 3 months unless otherwise approved. Applicants not requiring an interview will receive their results within 8 weeks of submission of payment and/or their application form, whichever is later.

Results for those requiring an interview will be issued within 12 weeks of submission of their application form and/or payment, whichever is later.

The application form, and where required, interview, will look for evidence of the applicant meeting the professional competences outlined by CILEX in the CILEX Competency Framework. The Framework comprises of activities, which have been grouped into duties, and behaviours and underpin the assessment.

See appendix 1 of this document for the CILEX Paralegal duties and appendix 2 of this document for CILEX behaviours.

Once all assessments have been completed, i.e. consideration of the application form and completion of the interview (where required), we will confirm the outcome of the assessment.

If the application form has been assessed and not met the required criteria, this will be returned to the applicant, with feedback, and a resubmission is recommended. An applicant's interview will only take place once the application form requirements have been met.

Please be aware that where instances of malpractice are identified, for example, copying the narrative of another employee and passing this off as your own, or where a supervisor writes the narratives on the employees' behalf, CILEX reserves the right to hold a full investigation.

When an application has not provided sufficient evidence to achieve the standard set by CILEX, a resubmission would be required. To resubmit will require the assessment process to be repeated and the assessment window will commence once the application form and applicable fee has been received.

4. The Role of Employers

To support any member of staff, whether new to the organisation or experienced but not qualified as an authorised legal person, you need to be confident that your organisation is able to provide the breadth of experience and supervision they need.

CILEX does not require employers to go through an authorisation process, to have a training principle or to follow a set training plan; however, applicants applying to CILEX to have their experience assessed will require validation from the employer that the experience narratives included within the application are accurate.

Referees providing validation for the applicant will ideally be an authorised person who has some day-to-day oversight and, in most cases, be the supervisor. In some organisations an experienced, but unqualified, legal person or senior manager will have oversight of the role being performed and the quality of work produced.

Where no suitable referee can be provided, for example if the applicant is a sole practitioner, CILEX will use the Experience Assessment interview process to validate the applicant's experience.

Supervisors or line managers of CILEX Paralegal Experience Assessment route applicants will find it useful to familiarise themselves with the duties, and underpinning activities and behaviours, aligned to their employee's role to ensure that:

- work and tasks allocated are of an appropriate technical level, gradually increasing the level and the complexity of the work overtime to support progression.
- there is the opportunity to use a broad range of skills, providing a balance between substantive and procedural tasks.
- there is an up-to-date training record, or that one is encouraged, that identifies the work the applicant has performed and the skills they have evidenced.
- there is enough opportunity to give regular feedback regarding the applicant's performance against the duties and behaviours required.

When referees or supervisors are asked to review an Experience Assessment application form, they should:

- provide feedback that is relevant to the narrative written by the employee against a specific duty, confirming that it is accurate
- sign the form
- date the form.
- give their name and role.

Following an employee's submission of their application form there may be instances where we need to contact the referee or you as the employer to ask for more information or clarification. We understand that referees are busy with their own workloads so we will endeavour to make this validation process as quick and streamlined as possible.

We are confident that employers will appreciate the importance of CILEX validating submissions and applying a consistently high standard for all of our membership designations. We appreciate the support of employers in this matter.

5. Alternative Routes to CILEX Membership

There are many ways to qualifying with CILEX.

CILEX offers routes to CILEX Chartered Lawyer with practice rights, as well as CILEX Paralegal via Experience Assessment or qualification routes.

5.1 CILEX Lawyer

To become a CILEX Lawyer, an authorised Chartered Legal Executive with full practice rights, requires the completion of a Level 6 or 7 qualification which meets the approved Regulatory Education Standard. These include:

- CILEX Professional Qualification (CPQ)
- CILEX Lawyer apprenticeship (Chartered Legal Executive apprenticeship standard). This standard requires the completion of a recognised qualification, such as CPQ.
- CILEX Level 3 and Level 6 Diploma qualification (the predecessor to CPQ) plus the practice rights course, and advocacy course where litigation is required.
- LPC plus CPQ bridging product
- Law degree plus the CILEX Graduate Qualification (CGQ)

5.2 CILEX Paralegal

To become a CILEX Paralegal requires the assessment of experience via:

- APEL – the CILEX experience assessment route. A minimum of 2 years' experience is required, gained within the last 5 years.

Or,

- L3 Paralegal apprenticeship
- CILEX Foundation stage (Diploma in law)

Appendix 1: Duties being assessed.

Evidenced through CILEX Experience Assessment applications.

CILEX Paralegal Duties

Duty 1	Your conduct	Provides high standards of client care, acting in the client's best interests, upholding ethical and professional conduct.
Duty 2	Performing Routine Tasks	Supports others to complete routine tasks, conducts legal research and analysis using digital tools. Presents information clearly and with a proposed solution/recommendation.
Duty 3	Working with Legal Documentation	Identifies, processes and drafts legal documentation using appropriate digital tools. Demonstrates understanding of the purpose of the document and any legal or regulatory requirement relevant. Ability to proof reading and use clear and precise language.
Duty 4	Working in a client's best interests	Acts in the best interests of the client, such as vulnerable clients. Knowledge of the law and the ability to apply this correctly to the client matter.
Duty 5	Working with stakeholders and other professionals	Supports the team and engages with stakeholders to move transactions forward, resolve issues, and build and maintain effective working relationship, recognising the principles of diversity and inclusion.
Duty 6	Progressing cases	Demonstrates understanding of the principles of workload management and progression of legal matters using systems and management tools where appropriate, to ensure all actions are accurately recorded in line with organisational procedure. Demonstrates an awareness of how technology supports legal practice.
Duty 7	Commercial Awareness	Recognises and supports the organisation's commercial strategy, with an understanding of your organisations aims and objectives and how to contribute towards achieving these.
Duty 8	Managing data risks and other risks to the organisation	Demonstrates understanding of key legislation and regulation including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act, with an awareness of the risks of data breach, money laundering, fraud and cyber security, and how to protect organisations from these.
Duty 9	Knowing your limit.	Identifies the limits of their personal professional experience and competence and escalates instructions that are beyond their scope of expertise.

Appendix 2: CILEX Overarching Behaviours

CILEX Paralegal Behaviours

Collaborative	Builds positive working relationships, respects the views and opinions of others, shares knowledge, deals with issues as they arise, works across boundaries, and makes contributions to the team.
Critical thinker	Collects and understands information, analyses and challenges it, identifies issues, draws appropriate conclusions to solve problems and makes robust recommendations and decisions.
Influencer	Creates a positive impact, communicates with others in a clear, concise and purposeful way, uses logical argument, presents information effectively, adapts communication style to suit audience and demonstrates resilience.
Driven to deliver	Takes accountability for quality of work, builds effective delivery frameworks, organises and prioritises, plans and structures work, sets high standards, works effectively under pressure and seeks continuous improvement.
Authentic	Builds trusted relationships, offers appropriate advice, acts reliably and with credibility, does what they say they will do, knows limitations of abilities, admits mistakes and consistently leads by example.
Curious	Future-focused, inquisitive and open-minded, shows interest in what is happening around them, seeks feedback and looks for ways to improve themselves and the organisation.