

Duration of assessment and samples guide

Last updated: February 2009

These guidelines are intended to enable practices, assessment bodies, assessors and consultants to calculate the duration of a Lexcel assessment.

The durations stated below replace all previously published duration and sample guidelines. All assessments conducted after **14th March 2009** must adhere to these guidelines. Any deviation from these guidelines must be approved by the Lexcel office in advance of an assessment. The Lexcel office will monitor consistency of their application.

If you have any questions or feedback regarding the duration of an assessment, contact the Lexcel office directly via:

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1. Factors affecting durations

The duration and sample guidelines apply to the practices as a whole. The total number of fee earners and support staff must be added across all branch offices.

The main factors affecting the length of the assessment is the number of:

- staff
- practice areas
- other quality standards held (e.g. Investors in People or ISO9001)

2. Preparation and report writing time

Preparing for an assessment is an important element of the assessment process. Assessors should allow a total of between **0.5 and 1 day preparation and report writing** time for initial, annual maintenance visits and full re-assessments.

Preparation should include reviewing the office manual, previous assessment reports (if applicable), selecting the interview sample and drafting the assessment plan.

3. Travel time

These guidelines **do not reflect travel time** to and from the on-site assessment. If the practice has multiple offices the assessment body and practice should agree how much time will be allocated to the assessor for travel and the associated cost.

4. Offices and work areas

All offices and work areas must be included in all initial, AMVs and full re-assessments. It is, therefore, compulsory that all offices are attended by the assessor and interview and file samples are taken across each office and work area.

5. Annual Maintenance Visits (AMV)

The duration for an AMV is approximately half that of an initial assessment.

6. Duration indicator tables

Table 1: Fee earners

Fee earners in the practice (min)	Fee earners in the practice (max)	Assessor days (min)	Assessor days (max)
1	5	0.5	1
6	15	1	1.5
16	25	1.5	2
26	50	2	2.5
51	75	2.5	3
76	100	3	3.5
101	125	3.5	4.5
126	500	4.5	6
501	1000	6	7.5
1001	4000	8	11

Table 2: Support staff

Support staff in the practice (min)	Support staff in the practice (max)	Assessor Days (min)	Assessor Days (max)
1	5	0.5	0.5
6	15	0.5	0.5
16	25	0.5	1
26	50	1	1
51	75	1	1
76	100	1	1
101	125	1	1.5
126	500	1.5	1.5
501	1000	1.5	2
1001	4000	2.5	3

7. Interview and file samples

Table 1: Fee earners

Fee earners in practice (min)	Fee earners in practice (max)	No. of fee earner in sample (min)	No. of fee earner in sample (max)
1	5	1	3
6	15	4	6
16	25	7	8
26	50	9	12
51	75	13	16
76	100	17	20
101	125	21	25
126	500	26	35
501	1000	36	50
1001	4000	51	70

Table 2: Support staff

Support staff in practice (min)	Support staff in practice (max)	No. of support staff in sample (min)	No. of support staff in sample (max)
1	5	1	3
6	15	4	5
16	25	6	8
26	50	9	10
51	75	11	12
76	100	13	15
101	125	16	18
126	500	19	22
501	1000	23	29
1001	4000	30	40

Table 3: File sample

No. of fee earners interviewed (min)	No. of fee earners interviewed (max)	File sample (min)	File sample (max)
1	3	5	9
4	6	10	18
7	8	19	22
9	12	23	29
13	16	30	34
17	20	35	45
21	25	46	52
26	35	53	70
36	50	71	90
51	70	91	120

8. Worked examples

Example 1 – Initial assessment or full re-assessment

Practice A has the following staff structure:

- Office 1: 26 partners, 48 fee earners and 35 support staff
- Office 2: 48 partners, 63 fee earners and 40 support staff
- Total = 185 fee earners and 75 support staff

Duration

Duration for practice:

- 4.5 to 6 days for fee earners (see section 6, table 1)
- 1 day for support staff (see section 6, table 2)
- 0.5 to 1 day planning, preparation and report writing
- Total duration for the practice = 6 to 8 days

Samples

- Fee earners: 26 to 35 (section 7, table 1)
- Support staff: 11 to 12 (section 7, table 2)
- File sample: 53 to 70 (section 7, table 3)

Example 2 – Annual Maintenance Visit (AMV)

Practice B has the following staff structure:

- Single office: 2 partners, 16 fee earners and 17 support staff.
- Total = 18 fee earners and 17 support staff

Duration

Initial calculation:

- 1.5 to 2 days for fee earners
- 0.5 to 1.0 day for support staff
- Initial total = 2 to 3 days but halve as it is an AMV = 1 to 1.5 days

Duration for practice:

- 1 to 1.5 days for fee earners and support staff
- 0.5 to 1 day for planning, preparation and report writing
- Total duration = 1.5 to 2.5 days

Samples

As an AMV, the sample is halved:

- Fee earners: 4 fee earners (see section 7, table 1)
- Support staff: 3 to 4 support staff (see section 7, table 2)
- Files for review: 10 to 18 files (see section 7, table 3)