

Details on the Certificates of Competence Scheme for Roadshows 2026

What is the Certificates of Competence Scheme (CCS)?

It is an AvMA certificated training scheme, broadly aimed at lawyers with 5/6 years' experience or less specialising in clinical negligence. It has been developed to support and enable junior lawyers to develop their skills and knowledge and work towards best practice. While it is not a route to full AvMA panel membership it should act as a foundation for achieving specialist AvMA panel accreditation in the future.

The CCS has been developed over several years. It has been written to help prepare junior lawyers who are or who will likely be handling low value claims especially if a Fixed Recoverable Costs (FRC) scheme is introduced for clinical negligence claims (CN). Even if a FRC scheme is not introduced CCS provides a way for the public to understand that the person who is representing them has secured a recognised level of experience and expertise and is conducting their case with a level of supervision from a senior member of the team.

Why should firms support junior lawyers to engage in the CCS programme?

- CCS is good for applicants and firms. It is a tool for junior lawyers to achieve recognition of their own level of competence. It can reassure firms that their staff are receiving the experience and training they need to become good specialist clinical negligence lawyers
- Firms will be able to advertise that employees have attained a level of competency, although there will be no quality mark/badge as there is for AvMA accredited lawyers.
- Not badged but helps the public identify that the more junior lawyer has achieved a level of competence, expertise and experience which they will hopefully find reassuring. Although this scheme is not being badged for the public, a certificate will be awarded by AvMA to anyone who successfully completes a level of competence under the scheme.
- AvMA will keep a register which can be made available to the public on a dedicated webpage: <https://www.avma.org.uk/resources-for-professionals/ccs/>
- CCS is intended to have a currency – the level of competence attained should act as an indication of a junior lawyer's ability and experience and should prove to be a useful tool for firms seeking to recruit new, junior staff.

Operational overview: Open to AvMA panel member firms

This scheme is currently only open to firms who have an AvMA panel member. AvMA panel members will have been able to demonstrate that they and their firm are able to meet the supervision requirements of AvMA accreditation process. By way of recap, those requirements can be found at paragraphs 1.46 – 1.49 of the AvMA Referral Panel Booklet: <https://www.avma.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2.-Panel-Booklet-2025.pdf>

Supervision Requirements: AvMA panel firms are expected to have effective supervision arrangements in place within the clinical negligence department, supervision should be performed in accordance with current best practice. Paragraph 1.47 of the panel booklet states we expect that: “**clinical negligence work will be overseen by an AvMA accredited lawyer or specific arrangements have been agreed with AvMA**”. Those supervision arrangements should ensure not only the professional development of practitioners within the department but that the firm's clinical negligence clients can be assured that their case will be conducted to the standard expected of an accredited clinical negligence specialist. Supervision goes to the

professional development of practitioners within the department and sits behind the CCS process.

Operation of CCS: We have endeavoured to keep this as simple and as straightforward as possible, the requirement is that the AvMA panel member agrees to mentor the junior lawyer ideally through the firm's supervision arrangements and will support them in their application of whichever of the three level of the CCS they are seeking to achieve. The nominated AvMA panel member should commit to mentoring the applicant for the duration of whichever level of CCS they are applying for. For the purposes of this scheme, and in accordance with AvMA panel accreditation requirements on supervision, AvMA recommends that the nominated AvMA panel member will typically be the junior lawyer's supervisor, but ultimately it is up to each firm to identify how the mentoring/supervising role in CCS is to be established. The AvMA panel member will need to have sufficient oversight of the CCS applicant's work to be satisfied that the applicant can meet the outcomes and learning objectives set in the various levels of the CCS, the nominated AvMA panel member will sign off that the outcomes and objectives set within the various levels of CCS logbooks have been met. See below under CCS process for more information on the outcomes and objectives.

Preparing for supervision meetings: We have endeavoured to design CCS in a way that enables the assessment of the applicant to be incorporated into regular supervision meetings. We recommend that the **applicant** (junior lawyer) go through the logbook in advance of the supervision meeting, identify the practices and experiences they have taken from their case load and match them with the outcomes and learning objectives identified in the logbook. The applicant should then set out how their casework experiences matches the outcomes and learning objectives set out in the logbook and bring this to their supervisor's attention (either in advance or at the supervision meeting) with a view to those tasks or learning objectives being signed off.

The supervisor (who is an AvMA Panel member) must be satisfied that the applicant can meet the standard identified in the outcomes and learning objectives. The supervisor should be confident that there is sufficient evidence through the applicant's casework experiences and elsewhere to satisfy them that the outcomes and learning objectives identified have been met.

Time investment: Although the CCS process endeavours to fit into day to day working practices, it is important to understand that anyone seeking to be assessed under the scheme (the applicant) will need to invest time by reading the logbook, and consider the outcomes and learning objectives that need to be demonstrated in advance of any supervision meetings with their supervisor. The applicant will then need to think about the cases they have worked on or are working on and think about the extent to which the actions taken on those cases enables them to show that they have the experience to satisfy the learning objectives. They should then be able to discuss this with their supervisor at regular supervision meetings and invite the supervisor to sign off the logbook.

The supervisor must be an accredited AvMA panel member. By signing off the applicant's logbook the supervisor/panel member is using their skill and judgment to commit to the applicant having reached a satisfactory level of competence to meet the outcomes and learning objectives set within the logbook. (See below for more information on the supervisor's responsibilities).

We do not expect the logbooks to be completed within a certain time but envisage each level will take several months to complete. How quickly each level is completed will depend on the cases the applicant is working on and how quickly they are being progressed, the type of cases the firm usually takes on, and the nature and complexity of each case and how rigorous the firms supervision standards are. While the scheme is not time bound, we will look at the amount of time taken to complete the logbook having regard to when interest was first registered on Form 1 and when the logbook was submitted for assessment by AvMA.

An overview of the CCS Process:

Samples of all the documents will be available on the AvMA website over the course of the next few weeks, this is to enable practitioners to view them prior to the CCS Roadshows which are taking place in London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol between mid-February and May. The full documents will be available once the applicant has registered their interest by completing form 1 (see below). Registration will be open after the series of roadshows have concluded in May. We will be reviewing the documents after each Roadshow to ensure they address any common issues raised by lawyers at the Roadshow meetings. We encourage panel members and junior lawyers to attend these meetings to find out more about the CCS scheme.

Commencing the process: This is done by completing Form 1 (An example of what Form 1 will look like is [here](#)) and submitting this to AvMA together with a registration fee of £50.00.

There are three entry levels for the CCS scheme. There is a logbook for each level. Each level is comprised of four categories with skills to be achieved or attained for each category. The skills level increases in difficulty and refinement as the junior lawyer or applicant goes up through the CCS levels. Recognising that experience is not a linear process there is inevitably some overlap between the outcomes and learning objectives set out in Levels 1, 2 and 3. We have given an estimate of the expected level commensurate to the post qualification experience expected – it is only an estimate but broadly the levels are aimed as follows:

Level 1: Is aimed at paralegals, CILEX lawyers, newly qualified solicitors and solicitors up to about two years post qualification experience (PQE). The aim of this level is to establish a solid foundation and knowledge base.

Level 2: Is aimed at more experienced paralegals, CILEX lawyers and solicitors who are two to four years PQE. It is expected that this cohort will be beginning to routinely apply their legal knowledge base to practice while continuing to expand their knowledge and experience, we want to see that they are becoming more confident practitioners.

Level 3: Is aimed at four to six years PQE solicitors. *Please note, paralegals are excluded from this level.* This level is aimed at applicants being able to demonstrate that they have consolidated their knowledge and practical skills and are routinely applying these skills to their caseloads.

Leapfrogging: To ensure that applicants have the foundations of a good level of knowledge and experience, AvMA encourages applicants to start at Level 1 CCS and work their way through to level 3. However, the scheme does enable a junior lawyer to skip a level and go in directly at a higher level, a process we refer to as leapfrogging. We expect that some applicants will be able to leapfrog when the scheme is first rolled out. Although leapfrogging is allowed it will not be encouraged.

Evidence of categories: Each of the three levels are comprised of four categories which are: 1. Client care; 2. Litigation; 3. Medical knowledge and understanding; 4. Healthcare provision, patient safety, complaints, and alternative forms of redress.

1.Client care: In this category we want to see that the applicant understands the impact of medical harm on clients. We will be reviewing the applicant's ability to manage client expectation. Communication with clients is always key and so we will want to see evidence of applicants progressing their client communication skills, whether by telephone, face to face, or the written word.

Good communication is extremely important in clinical negligence work, not only is this necessary to properly advise clients on legal test & process, but also to explain a clients funding options and the deductions that will be taken from their damages. Communication is the root to developing good client interview skills and helps with the risk assessment process. It is also important to understand that very often clients revert to instructing lawyers because of the poor experience they have had with other forms of redress, such as the NHS Complaints process, or the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). The client's experiences may have

caused them to suffer compound harm because of the way they have been treated by people administering those redress schemes. As you go up through the levels so the applicant's awareness and understanding of issues such as compound harm and informed trauma will be expected to increase.

2. Litigation: In this category we are assessing the applicant's knowledge, we want to be confident that they understand and have mastered the tenets of establishing a Clinical Negligence claim. Level 1 will look at whether the basic tenets have been achieved, more is expected at levels 2 and 3. As the applicant goes through the CCS levels so they will have to demonstrate a more developed understanding of and the ability to apply principles such as material contribution. As the litigation develops and more evidence becomes available, so risk assessments need to be revisited and issues such as proportionality need to be considered.

There are overlaps between some of these categories in that good communication skills will be required to draft a good client statement. Ensuring the statement is comprehensive will rely on the solicitor having good client care skills. The client care element will ensure that the solicitor finds a way of encouraging the client to talk about personal details, some of which may be very sensitive, such as continence issues.

Parts of litigation such as disclosure can often be seen as routine but they are critically important. Disclosure or the lack of it can tell a solicitor a lot about a case. An understanding of the purpose and use of the pre action protocol is also important and if properly utilised by both parties can help to bring about early resolution.

AvMA want to see that applicants are developing skills, confidence and ability to obtain and handle expert evidence. Equally, that they are developing skills in matters such as quantifying losses. The instruction of the right counsel for the client and for the issue in hand can also be central to the success and swift resolution of the case.

This category looks at issues such as the importance of issuing proceedings & limitation issues, expectations and purpose of court proceedings, advocacy (Primarily level 3), without prejudice meetings of experts (level 3 only) will be assessed. By level 3 applicants should be able to demonstrate at the very least, an understanding and use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and have had some trial experience or preparing for trial (level 3 only), inquests and supervision (level 3 only).

3. Medical knowledge and understanding: This is about tracking an applicant's ability to analyse the medical evidence in a case and their ability to research, we want to see how this skill has developed as the applicant progresses through the levels. They should also be able to demonstrate that they are able to critically analyse complex medical evidence and politely seek clarification and or challenge the medical experts on their evidence.

4. Healthcare provision, patient safety, complaints, and alternative forms of redress: In this category we want applicant's at a basic level to be able to show they have an understanding of the complaints procedure, the role of the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), NHS investigations from serious incident reviews to the more recent Patient Safety Investigation Review Framework (PSIRF). At the more advanced end we want to see that applicants are aware of processes such as the Perinatal Mortality Review Tool, Early Notification Scheme (ENS), Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

Applicants should understand the structure of the NHS. Be aware of and have an understanding in general terms of what role NHS England and other Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) such as the Care

Quality Commission (CQC) play in healthcare services and improvements. They should have an understanding of the role of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and its responsibilities.

Under this category we want applicants to demonstrate an understanding and preferably experience of preparing a case for inquest. To understand the role of the Medical Examiner and the limitations of this role. Applicants should know what professional regulation is and how to advise on it.

Applicants should know about signposting and bereavement pathways. Freedom to speak up champions and National Guardians.

Outcomes and Learning objectives: Just as each level is comprised of the four categories referred to above, it also identifies key skills and knowledge and within that there are outcomes and learning objectives identified. Supervisors are expected to look at the outcomes and learning objectives and tick off that these have been met as a way of establishing that the core skills have been met. The applicant should be able to direct the supervisor to their casework experience as evidence that those outcomes and learning objectives have been achieved

Evidence in support of the Logbook application: Key skills and knowledge

AvMA is not requesting sight of every document seen by the supervisor to satisfy themselves that the applicant has attained the skills and experience to meet the outcomes and learning objectives. It is for the supervisor to review documents and be satisfied that the learning objectives have been achieved.

An example of how the scheme might work in practice: *Jayne is the junior lawyers and applicant who is working through her Level 1 Certificates of Competence Scheme logbook. Jayne has recently had some casework experience analysing some medical evidence which has been received on the file. Denise is the AvMA panel member who has agreed to be Jayne's supervisor.*

At their regular supervision meeting, Jayne has drawn Denise's attention to the medico legal report of Dr Bloggs, prepared for Client X's file. Jayne observes that Dr Bloggs has failed to identify what aspects of the Client X's care fell below an acceptable standard but instead Dr Bloggs insists that the case was negligent and that he would not have medically assessed the client in the way the proposed defendant had done. Jayne also points out that Dr Bloggs has also failed to comment on the admissions which the Trust appear to have made in their duty of candour letter to the client and that he has not once cross referred to the client's fully ordered and paginated medical notes along with the chronology. At the supervision meeting, Jayne draws Denise's attention to Dr Bloggs' report, Denise agrees with Jayne's critique of the report. Denise has seen Jayne comment on weaknesses she has observed in other medical reports and can point to the fact that Jayne is able to analyse in an objective and impartial way medical reports and other investigation documents.

Having seen Dr Bloggs' report, Denise is confident that Jayne is able to satisfy one of the key skills and knowledge requirements of Level 1 CCS, under category 3, 'Medical knowledge and understanding'. Jayne has cross referred the report to the logbook where at paragraph 3.2 the key skill and knowledge to be obtained is an [Ability to critically analyse complex medical evidence](#). Under that section, Denise ticks the boxes to show that Jayne can critique complaints and investigation documents (3.2.1), critique expert report on liability (3.2.2), verify the contents of the medical report with the chronology of medical records (3.2.3).

Denise knows that Jayne has quite a bit of work to do before she completes her Level 1 logbook so to remind herself of what evidence she relied upon to satisfy herself that Jayne could demonstrate these competencies, Denise enters a note in the box headed "[Please identify the evidence relied upon by the supervisor](#)" Denise's entry reads along the following lines: 'At a

regular supervision meeting on 31.01.2026, Jayne showed me report of Dr Bloggs obtained on Client X file, she cross referred this report to this page of the logbook and discussed her concerns about the report. Having considered Dr Blogg's report myself, I am satisfied that Jayne can meet learning objectives 3.2.1 – 3.2.3 inclusive'.

Denise is not yet able to sign off that page by putting her (the supervisor's) signature in the box, because Jayne has not been able to provide Denise with any evidence to demonstrate that she has an understanding of common medical abbreviations used in medical records and reports. If Jayne is able to do that at her next supervision meeting with Denise next month, then providing Denise is satisfied that Jayne has acquired this skill, she can sign off that key skills and knowledge requirement by putting her signature in the Supervisor's signature box.

Evidence for AvMA requested in the logbook: From time-to-time AvMA asks for evidence to be submitted, **these requests will appear in the logbook in bold, red font**. Following on from the example given above [Refer to CCS Level 1/Category 3: Medical Knowledge and understanding/Key skills and knowledge 3.2: ability to critically analyse complex medical evidence/**Evidence for AvMA**], Jayne should consider submitting to AvMA a redacted copy of Dr Bloggs' report prepared on Client X file. That evidence can be submitted as Jayne goes along, which will save her looking for it months later when she is ready to submit the entire logbook to AvMA for assessment. Once the applicant has registered for CCS as whatever their intended level is, AvMA will open a secure SharePoint folder which only AvMA and that applicant will have access to. Jayne can save a redacted copy of Dr Bloggs's report to that SharePoint folder while she works on the rest of the key skills and knowledge requirements set out in the logbook.

The supervisor's responsibilities:

The AvMA panel member's signature: Where the supervisor is satisfied that the applicant can meet the outcomes and learning objectives set, they should sign the logbook on the relevant page in the box where it says: "Supervisor's signature". The panel member signature in the applicant's logbook acts as confirmation that in the AvMA panel member's (Supervisor's) view, the applicant has achieved the required outcomes and learning objectives. By signing the applicant's logbook, the AvMA panel member's signature confirms that the applicant has completed the task to a satisfactory or higher standard.

- The panel member should NOT sign off any aspect of the scheme without being satisfied that the applicant is proficient in a skill or learning objective.
- The applicant will need to discuss with their supervisor what evidence the supervisor requires to satisfy themselves that outcomes and learning objectives have been met.

Submission logbook/application to AvMA: Once the applicant has completed the logbook and all the pages signed off by the supervisor, it should be submitted to AvMA via the SharePoint folder set up for them, accompanied by payment of £250.

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