
18 Dec 2020

OISC - December 2020 Newsletter

Message From The Commissioner

I think it would be an understatement to say that 2020 has been a difficult year, with many of us facing unprecedented challenges in both our work and personal lives. As my first full calendar year as Commissioner, this year is certainly not what I anticipated when we started in January.

However, the challenges have brought with them opportunity and innovation, and I am immensely proud of how we have managed to quickly adapt and change, ensuring that our advisers continue to be supported so that advice seekers get the high quality advice and service they need.

Along with unprecedented, the phrase “the new normal” has become synonymous with 2020, and many of the changes we have had to make have helped us modernise and change our ways of working for the better.

As well as moving all our staff to remote working, we have introduced online premise audits, making the process quicker and more efficient. We have also started to take statements remotely to ensure that our enforcement activity can continue despite the restrictions in place due to COVID-19.

This year we also published our [2020 – 2023 Corporate Plan](#) and set out our new vision that:

Every person seeking immigration advice within the UK makes an informed choice to seek advice only from a regulated immigration adviser and receives reliable and professional advice and service that they have confidence and trust in.

To help achieve this vision we have started a three-year Development Programme that will transform the OISC and improving how we work with our advisers and stakeholders, and I look forward to sharing more about our plans in the new year.

The end of December also marks the end of the transition period for EU Exit, and with it significant changes to the Immigration Rules. We are working to make sure our competency assessments, advice and policies are updated and relevant to reflect the changes to the Immigration system

I expect that 2021 will be challenging as we continue to face COVID 19 restrictions and realise the changes of a new immigration system. However, I am confident that the OISC is ready to support our advisers and work with our partners to continue to overcome these challenges together.

John Tuckett

OISC Corporate Plan

You may have seen that earlier this year we published our 2020 – 2023 Corporate Plan which sets out our vision for the OISC and immigration services and how we will achieve it.

Most notably this includes placing the person needing immigration advice at the centre of everything we do and setting ourselves a mission of connecting the advice seeker with reliable advice.

Our vision and mission will be achieved through six strategic objectives:

Promote - ensure advice seekers and those around them know how and why to access advice from a regulated adviser and why this is important

Collaborate – work with others to create a system that is transparent and easy for the advice seeker to understand and navigate

Regulate - create a world class regulatory system where good practice is the norm for all OISC regulated advisers

Protect - take action against poor advice, exploitation and criminal activities

Enable - provide high-quality, efficient and cost-effective services where resources are managed dynamically to maximise value

Develop - reform the OISC into a modern and engaging organisation

In the new year we will be engaging with our advisers and partners on what this means for the OISC and how we regulate including setting up new adviser and allies forums.

Premise audits

With ongoing COVID-19 restrictions on travel and Government recommendations that people should work from home where possible, we will be continuing to deliver our premise audits online for the foreseeable future.

The new remote audit, which were introduced earlier this year, require advisers to provide the OISC access to a number of pre-selected files and documents. To date we have completed 126 audits online and remote audits are now being extended to include more complex audits.

Audits are an important part of ensuring that all OISC regulated advisers are working to our Code of standards and provide advice seekers with the confidence they are receiving good service and advice.

Online Competence Assessment

Due to continued restrictions in place for COVID-19 we have had to cancel all in person competency assessment for the foreseeable future.

To make sure that applicants still completed their assessments in September we launched online assessments. Since then over 400 candidates have successfully completed the online assessments at all OISC levels, with many finding them preferable to the handwritten tests with most experiencing no issues with onboarding or taking the test. The online assessments have further benefits of having no limits on capacity or travel costs.

Following their success, we are planning to continue to use online assessments moving permanently away from in person assessments. Assessments are still held at a specific time and date with the next one planned for January 2021.

Changes to Immigration rules

As you will be aware a large number of changes to the Immigration Rules took effect on the 1 December 2020, with further changes to take effect at the end of December. Whilst this doesn't change how we regulate immigration advice and services it does change what we need to assess applicants on.

The extent of the rule changes made it necessary for the OISC to cancel our planned December assessment event, so that exam papers and the exam resource book could be updated to incorporate the changes.

We are hoping to publish on our website before Christmas, the revised exam resource book, which will allow candidates to adequately prepare for assessments which will resume in January. The exam resource book is available to all advisers and we hope will be a useful resource.

Supporting EU citizens apply to the EU Settlement Scheme

Earlier this year Home Office announced an additional **£8 million of funding** to help charities and local authorities support vulnerable EU citizens apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. The funding can be used to support organisations provide legal support, caseworker services or general advice and builds on £9 million funding which was awarded to 57 charities in 2019.

The OISC's EUSS Registration Scheme supports organisations that want to advise EU citizens on their applications for settlement in the UK. Registration is OISC Level 1 (limited to EU Settlement Scheme) and to date 61 organisations have registered through the scheme.

If you are already registered with the OISC and have received funding and would like to add a new adviser to your registration please complete and submit a [New Adviser Application Form \(EU Settlement\)](#)

If you are a not for profit organisation and are not registered with the OISC you should complete and submit an [Application Form for Registration EUSS](#)

Solicitors and OISC Regulation

The OISC [Regulation and Solicitors Guidance](#) has been updated and is available from the OISC website. The update includes information for solicitors regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) following the SRA's new standards and regulation.

The update includes advice on whether an organisation needs to be OISC registered and whether solicitors who work for them need to seek OISC authorisation as well as setting out compliance requirements on solicitors working within OISC registered organisations.

Contact Information

Cornelius Alexander

Corporate Communications Business Partner

OISC

cornelius.alexander@oisc.gov.uk

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