

Changes to the Level 1 and Level 2 Immigration Syllabuses

Level 1

The overall direction of change

The current syllabus focuses largely on knowledge and awareness whereas the new syllabus focuses on competence, practical application, client care, regulatory compliance, record keeping, decision-making and professional standards.

Whilst most of the core immigration law content remains the same, the new syllabus:

- Introduces many new **practical competencies ("Can..." statements)**.
- Places greater emphasis on **application of knowledge**, not just awareness.
- Expands content on **legal sources, decision-making, ethics, client care, and casework skills**.
- Provides much more detailed expectations of what a Level 1 adviser must be able to do in practice.

Major structural differences

Area	Current syllabus	New syllabus
Approach	Knowledge-based	Competency-based
Learning outcomes	Focuses on what advisers should know	Focuses on what advisers should know and be able to do
Practical application	Limited	Extensive
Ethics content	Basic	Significantly expanded
Casework skills	Brief	Detailed
Decision-making section	Basic awareness	Detailed application and advice requirements

Immigration Law Section

New content in new syllabus

1. Legal Sources

Current syllabus only requires detailed knowledge of the structure and sources of immigration law.

New syllabus adds explicit competencies:

- Identify primary and secondary sources of law.
- Distinguish between:
 - Acts of Parliament
 - Statutory Instruments
 - Immigration Rules
 - Home Office policy
- Explain hierarchy and legal force.
- Understand interaction of:
 - legislation
 - rules
 - policy
 - case law.
- Locate and apply legal sources to client cases.
- Monitor legal developments and update practice.

2. Applications under the Immigration Rules

Current syllabus focuses on knowledge of procedures.

New syllabus additionally requires advisers to:

- Identify appropriate Immigration Rule routes.
- Explain application procedures to clients.
- Prepare and submit compliant applications.
- Apply evidential flexibility provisions.
- Apply Appendix FM-SE and appendix document requirements.
- Recognise invalidity risks.
- Manage fee and timing issues.
- Keep up with procedural changes.

New emphasis

The adviser must now demonstrate operational competence rather than merely understand processes.

3. Operation of Immigration Rules

Most substantive content remains unchanged.

However, the new syllabus adds:

Suitability provisions

Instead of simply knowing Part 9 exists:

- Identify which suitability grounds apply.
- Understand interaction between:
 - eligibility
 - suitability
 - route-specific requirements.

Analytical skills

Advisers must be able to assess:

- settlement routes
- switching provisions
- likely leave granted
- route-specific consequences

rather than simply know they exist.

4. Personnel and Terminology

This section is heavily expanded in the new syllabus.

New requirements

Understanding the roles of:

- Immigration Officers
- Caseworkers
- Presenting Officers
- First-tier Tribunal Judges
- Upper Tribunal Judges
- Authorised representatives
- Home Office
- Immigration Enforcement
- Regulatory bodies

5. New terminology competencies

Must now:

- Use technical terms correctly.
- Explain legal terminology to clients.
- Distinguish commonly confused concepts such as:
 - refusal vs rejection

- inadmissibility vs ineligibility
- statutory instrument vs policy guidance
- Translate legal language into plain English.

None of this detail appears in the current syllabus

6. Immigration Decisions

This is one of the largest changes.

Current syllabus

Requires basic knowledge of:

- extensions
- cancellation
- ILR
- nationality
- removal
- deportation

New syllabus

Adds detailed competencies:

Advisers must be able to:

- Identify decisions at every stage.
- Understand who makes them.
- Explain legal consequences.
- Understand appeal rights.
- Understand administrative review rights.
- Assess impact on lawful residence.
- Assess enforcement consequences.
- Identify available remedies.
- Advise on next steps.

This is a significant expansion.

7. Ethics

This is one of the most heavily expanded areas.

Current syllabus

Contains only:

- Level 1 limits
- referrals
- duty of care
- conflicts
- confidentiality

New syllabus adds

Regulatory knowledge

- Code of Standards
- Guidance on Competence
- Complaints Scheme

Compliance

- Practice systems
- Organisational procedures

Client care

- Scope of work
- Informed consent
- Fees information

Professional behaviour

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Transparency

Equality duties

- Fair treatment
- Non-discrimination

Competence duties

- Remaining up to date
- Remaining competent

Reporting misconduct

- Escalation procedures
- Ethical concerns

Marketing rules

- Touting
- Misleading conduct
- Improper influence

This is a substantial increase in ethical and regulatory expectations.

8. Casework Skills

This is another area of major expansion.

Current syllabus

Contains seven core skills.

New syllabus adds

- Asking effective questions.
- Giving detailed legal advice.
- Explaining complex law simply.
- Drafting detailed client statements.
- Maintaining UKVI interview records.
- Maintaining comprehensive case records.
- Recording communications with third parties.
- Risk awareness.
- Vulnerability assessment.

The role becomes much more casework-focused

Overall, the new syllabus is designed to assess whether a Level 1 adviser can competently perform immigration casework in practice, whereas the current syllabus is more focused on whether the adviser knows the relevant law and procedure

Changes to the Level 2 Immigration syllabus

Key differences at a glance

New subject areas introduced in new syllabus

1. **Trafficking and Modern Slavery**
2. **Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse**
3. **Most Vulnerable Dependant Adult Claimants (MVDAC)**
4. **Statelessness**

Significantly expanded areas

1. Immigration law and legal sources.
2. Applications outside the Immigration Rules.
3. Human rights.
4. Appeals and remedies.
5. Ethics.
6. Casework skills.
7. Client care and record keeping.

Main shift

Current syllabus focuses on what an adviser should **know**.

New syllabus focuses on what an adviser should be able to **do in practice**, particularly in complex immigration, protection, statelessness, trafficking, domestic abuse and human-rights cases.

High-level comparison

Area	Current syllabus	New syllabus
Overall style	Knowledge-based	Competency-based
Practical skills (further details below)	Limited	Extensive
Ethics (further details below)	Basic	Advanced
Trafficking & Modern Slavery	Not included	New standalone section
Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse	Not included	New standalone section
Statelessness	Limited reference	Full specialist section
Human Rights	Core principles	Expanded with practical application
Casework	Basic	Advanced
Record keeping	Basic	Explicitly required
Expert evidence	Not specified	Included

The new syllabus is a substantially expanded, competency-based revision of the current syllabus.

The underlying legal subjects are largely the same, but the new syllabus:

- Adds extensive **"can do" competencies**.
- Expands several subject areas substantially.
- Introduces entirely new standalone topics.
- Raises expectations around practical casework, ethics and client management.
- Places much greater emphasis on applying law to real client scenarios.

1. Ethics and Professional conduct

Current syllabus

Contains traditional duties:

- duty of care
- conflict of interest
- confidentiality
- acting professionally

New syllabus

Adds substantially more.

New requirements

Regulatory Knowledge

- Code of Standards.
- Guidance on Competence.
- Complaints Scheme.

Ethical Case Management

- Accurate case management.
- Avoiding misleading submissions.

Independent Ethical Judgment

- Making ethical decisions in complex situations.

Vulnerable Clients

- Trauma-informed practice.
- Cultural competence.

Independence

- Resisting improper pressure.

Regulatory Compliance

- Organisation-wide compliance duties.

2. Communication Skills

Both have similar foundations.

New syllabus

- Attendance notes.
- Contemporary records.
- Advanced written representations.
- More sophisticated client communication requirements.

3. Casework Skills

This is one of the biggest changes.

Current syllabus

Requires advisers to:

- identify applications
- assess cases
- gather evidence
- use case law

New syllabus

Expert Evidence

- Instructing experts.
- Knowing when expert reports are required.

Client Management

- Obtaining detailed instructions.
- Taking witness statements.
- Gathering case histories.

Evidence Assessment

- Weighing evidence.
- Evaluating reliability.

Advocacy

- Written representations.
- Oral representations.

File Management

- Maintaining organised files.
- Interview records.
- Case records.
- Contact records.

Advanced Legal Analysis

- Identifying salient arguments.
- Responding effectively to counterarguments.