

# **Specialist Accreditation Scheme**

## **Family Law 2025**

Recommendations from the Specialist Accreditation Scheme, Subcommittee on the specialist accreditation framework for Family lawyers

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**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. This report sets out proposals for the implementation of a specialist accreditation scheme for Singapore lawyers practising in the field of family law in Singapore (the “**Family Law scheme**”).
- 1.2. Family law is an evolving area of practice, with the 2024 launch of the Therapeutic Justice (“**TJ**”) Model marking a significant step by the Family Justice Courts (“**FJC**”) towards the widespread adoption of TJ principles. A key objective of this initiative is to encourage the amicable resolution of family disputes, which is commonly facilitated through the process of mediation.
- 1.3. Consequently, the family law bar is in the process of evolving their practices alongside the changing legal landscape, through the adoption of the aforementioned TJ principles and by setting aside the more traditional adversarial mindset of dispute resolution. This shift has also been facilitated by the continued offering of the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme (“**FTJCP**”), a training course introduced in 2021.
- 1.4. At the Opening of the Legal Year 2025, the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon announced the formation of a subcommittee, to be chaired by the Honourable Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, in her capacity as the Presiding Judge of the FJC, to study the development of a bespoke accreditation framework for family law practitioners in Singapore.

- 1.5. The Specialist Accreditation Scheme Family Law Subcommittee (the “**Subcommittee**”) was duly set up in March 2025 under the Specialist Accreditation Board of the Singapore Academy of Law. The Subcommittee’s recommendations are geared towards:
- a. promoting continued development and improving the standard, quality and delivery of family law services;
  - b. providing the legal industry and general public with a reliable means of identifying and accessing family lawyers who have proven themselves as possessing the requisite skills and knowledge in family law;
  - c. recognising the high level of proficiency of family lawyers and promoting continued professional development and improvement;
  - d. encouraging thought leadership; and
  - e. incentivising younger family lawyers to hone their skills and knowledge in family law.
- 1.6. The key recommendations of the Subcommittee are as follows:
- a. **Tiers:** There should be a two-tier framework, comprising “Advanced Accredited Specialists” as the higher tier, and “Accredited Specialists” as the lower tier. Specialists accredited in either tier shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as “Family Law Specialists”.
  - b. **PQE:** Advanced Accredited Specialists should have a minimum of ten years of post-qualification experience (“**PQE**”), and Accredited Specialists should have a minimum of five years of PQE.
  - c. **Substantial involvement:** Family Law Specialists should engage in a minimum number of hours of family law practice per year prior to accreditation.
    - i. **Contested hearing or trial involvement:** Family Law Specialists should be involved in a minimum number of contested hearings or trials.
    - ii. **Mediation involvement:** Family Law Specialists should be involved in a minimum number of mediations.
  - d. **FTJCP:** Family Law Specialists should be certified in TJ prior to accreditation through the completion of the FTJCP.
  - e. **CPD:** Family Law Specialists should accrue a minimum number of Continuing Professional Development (“**CPD**”) points in family law per year prior to application.
  - f. **Examination:** Accredited Specialist candidates should pass a written examination prior to accreditation.
  - g. **Selection panel:** Both Accredited Specialists and Advanced Accredited Specialists candidates should undergo a selection panel interview prior to accreditation.
  - h. **Reaccreditation cycle:** Specialist accreditation should be valid for three years, after which Family Law Specialists should apply for reaccreditation to maintain their status.

1.7. A summary table of the key recommendations is as follows:

Requirement	Accredited Specialist	Advanced Accredited Specialist
<b>Accreditation</b>		
Minimum PQE	5 years	10 years
Substantial involvement	In immediate 3 years prior to application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 600 hours of Family Law practice per year</li> <li>Involvement in 4 out of 6 categories of contested hearings / trials and 10 mediations as lead counsel or second chair</li> </ul> Must have completed FTJCP	In immediate 5 years prior to application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 800 hours of Family Law practice per year</li> <li>Involvement in 4 out of 6 categories of contested hearings / trials and 20 mediations as lead counsel or second chair</li> <li>Involvement in an additional 6 contested hearings / trials as lead counsel</li> </ul> Must have completed FTJCP
CPD	In immediate 3 years prior to application, 6 public and / or private CPD points per year in Family Law	In immediate 5 years prior to application, 6 public and / or private CPD points per year in Family Law
References	2 favourable reference statements	2 favourable reference statements
Assessment methods	Open-book examination and selection panel interview	Selection panel interview
Accreditation title	Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law AS (FAM)	Adv. Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law AAS (FAM)
Validity	3 years	3 years
<b>Reaccreditation</b>		
Practice criteria	In immediate 3 years prior to reaccreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 600 hours of Family Law practice per year</li> <li>Involvement in 4 out of 6 categories of contested hearings / trials and 10 mediations as lead counsel or second chair</li> </ul>	In immediate 3 years prior to reaccreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 800 hours of Family Law practice per year</li> <li>Involvement in 6 contested hearings / trials and 20 mediations as lead counsel</li> </ul>
CPD	In immediate 3 years prior to reaccreditation, 6 public and / or private CPD points per year in Family Law	In immediate 3 years prior to reaccreditation, 6 public and / or private CPD points per year in Family Law

## 2. Background - Family Law in Singapore

### Introduction to Family Law

- 2.1 Family law deals with a wide range of legal issues concerning families.<sup>1</sup> The Subcommittee notes that family proceedings may be categorised into the following sub-areas:

#### Core Areas

- a. Divorce, judicial separation, nullity and ancillary matters under Part 10 of the Women's Charter 1961 (2020 Rev Ed) ("**Charter**");
- b. Custody and guardianship under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed) or wardship under s 17(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act 1969 (2020 Rev Ed) read with s 22(1)(a) of the Family Justice Act 2014 (2020 Rev Ed);
- c. Maintenance and enforcement of such maintenance under Parts 8 and 9 of the Charter;
- d. Protection against family violence under Part 7 of the Charter;

#### Other Areas

- e. Adoption under the Adoption of Children Act 2022 (2020 Rev Ed);
  - f. Probate and administration under the Probate and Administration Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed);
  - g. Proceedings under the Mental Capacity Act 2008 (2020 Rev Ed); and
  - h. Care and protection orders, family guidance orders, or cases involving youth offenders under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993 (2020 Rev Ed).
- 2.2 Such family proceedings are heard by the FJC, comprising the Family Division of the High Court, the Family Courts, and the Youth Courts.
- 2.3 The Subcommittee has taken the characteristics of family proceedings into consideration in formulating our recommendations. Family proceedings are brought by parties acting in their personal capacities. They tend to bring out strong emotions, and their outcomes could greatly affect any child of the marriage, although the child is not a party.

### Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System

- 2.4 The impetus for a family law specialist accreditation scheme began in 2020, following the Government's acceptance of the recommendations of the Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System in September 2019,<sup>2</sup> which included the certification and accreditation of family law practitioners.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Family Justice Courts, "Family" <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/family>> (accessed 2 June 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Law, "Government Accepts All Recommendations by Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System" <<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/press-releases/government-accepts-all-recommendations-by-committee-to-review-and-enhance-reforms-in-the-family-justice-system/>> (accessed 3 June 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Law, "Government Accepts All Recommendations by Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System" at Annex B <<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/news/press-releases/2020/1/RERF%20-%20Annex%20B.pdf>> (accessed 3 June 2025).

- 2.5 In particular, the Ministry of Law and Ministry of Social and Family Development elaborated that “*accreditation is meant for top-tier family law practitioners who are experts in the field of family law and practice*”.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.6 Building on this groundwork, the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon observed, at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025, that family law practitioners play a vital role in the implementation of the TJ Model,<sup>5</sup> and announced that a subcommittee led by the Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts, Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, would be formed to study the development of a customised and bespoke family law specialist accreditation framework in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to recognise the essential role of family law practitioners, and their vital contribution to TJ and other family law initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

## The role of Therapeutic Justice in Family Law

### *The Therapeutic Justice Model and the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme*

- 2.7 The TJ Model was launched by the Honourable the Chief Justice in October 2024 and emphasises a judge-led approach in which parties, family lawyers, court professionals, and other professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, and social workers collaborate to find timely and enduring solutions to family disagreements within the framework of the law. It encourages resolving disputes amicably, reducing acrimony, and focusing on the long-term interests of the family and children.
- 2.8 More specifically, the TJ Model outlines the crucial role of family lawyers, which includes familiarising their clients with TJ aims and principles, facilitating problem-solving and collaboration between the parties, and adopting a cooperative and constructive approach in conducting court proceedings. This underscores the importance of family lawyers being equipped with the necessary skills to lower the level of acrimony and to assist their clients and the court toward an amicable resolution of their family disputes. Examples of the competencies and skillsets required would include knowledge of basic social science concepts, familiarity with the different types of therapeutic or other related support services and programmes available, knowledge of wider multi-disciplinary topics that can help parties in practical ways, and family mediation skills.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.9 Preceding the launch of the TJ Model, the FTJCP was first conducted from October to November 2021 by the Singapore Academy of Law (“SAL”), the FJC, and the Law Society of Singapore. During the FTJCP, attendees (most of whom are family lawyers) are taught the relevant multi-disciplinary specialist skillsets. These largely line up with the skills required of family lawyers as set out in the TJ Model, including familiarity with principles embodied in the TJ Model, social science perspectives, interpersonal skills training (including conflict management and communication), and mediation advocacy.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Law, “Government Accepts All Recommendations by Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System” <<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/press-releases/government-accepts-all-recommendations-by-committee-to-review-and-enhance-reforms-in-the-family-justice-system/>> (accessed 3 June 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Family Justice Courts, “Family Justice Courts Therapeutic Justice Model” <[https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/family-docs/fjc\\_tj\\_full.pdf?sfvrsn=6d5426b0\\_2](https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/family-docs/fjc_tj_full.pdf?sfvrsn=6d5426b0_2)> (accessed 3 June 2025).

<sup>6</sup> SG Courts, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon: Opening of the Legal Year 2025” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/chief-justice-sundaresh-menon--response-delivered-at-the-opening-of-the-legal-year-2025>> (accessed 3 June 2025).

<sup>7</sup> Family Justice Courts, “Family Justice Courts Therapeutic Justice Model” <[https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/family-docs/fjc\\_tj\\_full.pdf?sfvrsn=6d5426b0\\_2](https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/family-docs/fjc_tj_full.pdf?sfvrsn=6d5426b0_2)> (accessed 4 June 2025).

- 2.10 Now jointly organised by SAL and the Singapore University of Social Sciences, the FTJCP continues to run, with its most recent iteration (fourth run) taking place in May 2025.

Mediation in Family Law

- 2.11 Mediation is a core component of TJ in family law practice. Mediation and counselling are usually employed at an early stage of proceedings though there is flexibility to employ mediation and counselling at different points in the court process under the TJ Model. In addition, mediation and counselling are mandatory for cases involving minor children.
- 2.12 As such, the Subcommittee recognises that mediation advocacy should be a mandatory skillset for TJ experts in family law practice.

**3. Approaches in recognising Family Law competence in other jurisdictions**

- 3.1 Accreditation schemes in other jurisdictions have sought to recognise the expertise of legal practitioners in family law, e.g. Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The Subcommittee has studied the family law schemes in these jurisdictions to provide context and points of comparison for the Family Law scheme.

**General trends**

- 3.2 All the schemes have a set of criteria, some more general and flexible than others, that candidates must satisfy in order to be successful in their application. While the specifics differ, they encompass the following common requirements:
- a. a minimum number of years of PQE;
  - b. substantial involvement or experience in family law, as declared by candidates on an honour system; and
  - c. reaccreditation or renewal of the accreditation after a set period of validity.
- 3.3 The following requirements are also present in many, but not all, of the schemes studied:
- a. participation in CPD or Continuing Legal Education (“CLE”) in family law
  - b. provision of favourable references attesting to the candidates’ practice in family law
  - c. passing of an assessment (or multiple methods of assessments)

An overview of the criteria can be found in Appendix C, and a summary table of the criteria required by each jurisdiction is set out below.

Jurisdiction	Minimum PQE	Substantial Involvement	CPD / CLE	References	Assessment	Re-accreditation
NSW	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Queensland	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Victoria	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Western Aus.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Ontario	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Eng. & Wales	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Jurisdiction	Minimum PQE	Substantial Involvement	CPD / CLE	References	Assessment	Re- accreditation
Scotland	✓	✓		✓		✓
California	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Singapore (proposed scheme)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.4 The proposed Family Law scheme adopts the key criteria common across the schemes studied, *i.e.*, the requirement that a candidate must satisfy a minimum PQE, show substantial involvement in the practice area, participate in CPD activities, provide references, undergo an assessment and go through a reaccreditation process to maintain accreditation. These criteria, tailored to the Singapore family law landscape, form a robust accreditation system that practitioners can take pride in as a mark of professional distinction.

## 4. Proposed Family Law Specialist Accreditation Scheme

### Defining Family Law specialist competence

4.1 As part of the family justice ecosystem, family lawyers play a crucial role in aligning their client with the court's approach under the TJ Model. A Family Law Specialist is therefore expected to possess empathy for their client's well-being and the requisite soft skills and techniques to focus their client on the holistic interests of the family. Broadly, the Subcommittee was of the view that a Family Law Specialist should demonstrate:

- a. competence in the Core Areas of family law practice in para 2.1; and
- b. a strong understanding of the TJ Model and practise effectively according to TJ principles, including having proficient mediation advocacy skills, with the appreciation that the outcome of the proceedings affects each member of the family.

4.2 Key recommendations and explanations for changes from existing schemes are outlined below. The detailed recommendations for the family law accreditation framework are in Appendix A.

### Involvement in Dispute Resolution

4.3 The Subcommittee recognised the need to strike a balance in determining the appropriate metrics for assessing the competence of a Family Law Specialist. A Family Law Specialist must be able to demonstrate competent courtroom expertise in contested hearings or trials, while also demonstrating effective mediation advocacy to resolve disputes amicably. Accordingly, the threshold requirement for the minimum number of contested hearing of trials should be sufficiently significant to demonstrate competence in family litigation, without being so high as to inadvertently incentivise unnecessary litigation. This requirement ensures that Family Law Specialists maintain baseline litigation competency, even as mediation remains the preferred mode of resolution of family disputes in line with TJ principles.

4.4 Similarly, in light of the central role of mediation in family law practice, where a large proportion of divorce cases are resolved through mediation without the need for a contested hearing,<sup>8</sup> the Subcommittee was mindful that any metric to show a substantial involvement in the practice of

<sup>8</sup> Around 70% of divorce cases that went to mediation were resolved through the process in 2017: The Straits Times (28 February 2018), "*Encouraging' results from divorce mediation: Family Justice Courts*" <<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/7-out-of-10-divorce-cases-settled-through-mediation-in-2017>> (accessed 3 June 2025). See also: "*overall, more than 90% of all divorces eventually resolve through parties sorting things out without adjudication*", Family Justice Courts Workplan 2020 (21 May 2020), <[https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/news-docs/fjc-workplan-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=8b619dc0\\_0](https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/news-docs/fjc-workplan-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=8b619dc0_0)> (accessed 3 June 2025).

family law should promote the use of mediation wherever appropriate. Introducing a requirement for a minimum number of mediated cases would reflect the expectation that Family Law Specialists possess strong mediation experience and the flexibility to explore alternative means of dispute resolution.

- 4.5 Accordingly, the Subcommittee recommends that the accreditation criteria for Family Law Specialists should include an involvement in a stipulated minimum number of contested hearings / trials, supplemented with a significant minimum number of mediations (refer to paragraphs A.4 and A.11 in Appendix A).

FTJCP as a pre-requisite

- 4.6 In order to signal and strengthen the ethos that Family Law Specialists should align their practice with the TJ framework, and to ensure that Family Law Specialists are equipped with a thorough and standardised understanding of the TJ Model, the Subcommittee recommends that attendance and completion of the FTJCP should be a compulsory requirement for accreditation. This would enhance specialist competency in collaborative client and case management skills. Making completion of the FTJCP a requirement would provide a clear baseline for all candidates.
- 4.7 One concern was that the cost of attending the FTJCP would be a barrier to entry for accreditation. However, the Subcommittee noted that candidates would be able to benefit from significant SkillsFuture Singapore subsidies, as well as discounts, which would render the cost of attending the FTJCP more manageable. These include:
- a. a SAL member discount of 20%;
  - b. an “early bird” discount of 25%;
  - c. tiered SkillsFuture Singapore funding (including a baseline SkillsFuture Funding for Singapore Citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents of 50%, and a more substantial SkillsFuture Mid-career Enhanced Subsidy for employer-sponsored and self-sponsored Singapore Citizens aged 40 years old and above of 70%).<sup>9</sup>

For reference, the base price of the most recent run of FTJCP in May 2025 was \$2,000. Taking into account the above subsidies and discounts, the cost for most candidates who signed up to attend the FTJCP in time for the “early bird” rate (*i.e.*, based on the profile of a practitioner who is a Singapore Citizen / PR, SME-sponsored, and an SAL member) would have been \$468 (including GST).

Hours of work as an indicator of substantial involvement in family law

- 4.8 Another area that the Subcommittee deliberated on was whether to use billable hours / amounts as a requirement to demonstrate substantial involvement in family law. While billable hours and monetary thresholds are used as metrics in the Building and Construction Law (“**B&C**”) and Maritime and Shipping Law (“**M&S**”) schemes, the Subcommittee recognised that family law practice differs greatly from these practice areas. Key concerns included:
- a. the need to disincentivise excessive or unnecessary billings in family matters, to facilitate access to justice for members of the public;
  - b. the common use of fixed-fee arrangements where practitioners do not charge based on time spent; and
  - c. the drive to encourage *pro bono* work, which is a key part of family practice, but that would not be accounted for in this metric.
- 4.9 Given the foregoing, the Subcommittee considers the number of hours of work done in family law to be a more appropriate metric than the number of billable hours / billable amounts in

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<sup>9</sup> See the full funding and discount table for the FTJCP run in May 2025: Singapore Academy of Law, “Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme (May 2025)” <[https://store.lawnet.com/family-therapeutic-justice-certification-programme-may-2025.html#tab2\\_content.tab](https://store.lawnet.com/family-therapeutic-justice-certification-programme-may-2025.html#tab2_content.tab)> (accessed 21 July 2025).

measuring Family Law Specialist competence. This follows the substantial involvement criteria set by the D2E scheme, which also considers hours of work done in the practice area, rather than billable hours / billable amounts.

- 4.10 In terms of the number of hours of work done in family law, the Subcommittee was cognisant of the unique reality of family law practice, where a significant amount of time is spent on time-intensive and emotionally-complex work which requires active management of and engagement with clients, resulting in substantial time being spent on each case file by both junior and senior family lawyers. With this in mind, and taking into account the recommended use of hours of work done, rather than billable hours as a metric, the Subcommittee recommends a higher threshold number of hours of work done in family law per year for both Accredited Specialist and Advanced Accredited Specialist tiers, as compared to the schemes for the other existing practice areas, to reflect the attendant demands on a Family Law Specialist.
- 4.11 In summary, the Subcommittee's key recommendations in the accreditation framework are to require individuals to:
- a. have practised for a minimum number of hours in family law per year within a specified time period immediately prior to application;
  - b. have attended and completed the FTJCP;
  - c. have been involved in a minimum number of specified categories of contested hearings / trials within specified time periods immediately prior to application; and
  - d. have been involved in a significant minimum number of mediations within a specified time period immediately prior to application.
- 4.12 The full recommendations for the accreditation framework and accreditation requirements are in Appendix A.

### Who can be accredited?

- 4.13 Like the other existing Schemes, the Family Law scheme will be open to Singapore-called practising lawyers.
- 4.14 However, unlike the existing Schemes, the Family Law scheme will not be open to in-house counsel. This is because there is no equivalent in-house counsel role for family law.
- 4.15 The Subcommittee also considered the eligibility of Legal Service Officers ("LSOs"), MX-Legal officers<sup>10</sup> and Judicial Service Officers ("JSOs") for the Family Law scheme, especially for LSOs and MX-Legal officers who often handle similar types of family law cases as law firm practitioners, such as those in the Legal Aid Bureau ("LAB") of the Ministry of Law, and for JSOs who preside over family law matters, such as those posted to the Family Justice Courts.
- 4.16 However, the Subcommittee notes that the Family Law scheme would not necessarily be relevant to these officers, since they do not serve private clients, and have their own training framework under the Legal Service Commission, Judicial Service Commission, or other relevant government department that they are attached to.
- 4.17 The Subcommittee nevertheless explored the possibility of qualified<sup>11</sup> LSOs, MX-Legal officers and JSOs applying for accreditation after they have left the government service. One practical

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<sup>10</sup> "MX-Legal officer" refers to officers within the Singapore Civil Service under the MX (Management Executive) scheme who are qualified persons as defined in s 2(1) of the Legal Profession Act (1997 Rev. Ed.).

<sup>11</sup> Under the SAL Rules r 10(4), a candidate would need to be admitted as an advocate and solicitor to be eligible to be considered for accreditation.

challenge that stood out was that they do not maintain timesheets, so it may be difficult for them to satisfy the proposed requirements for proving substantial involvement.

- 4.18 In this regard, the Subcommittee recommends that if such an LSO, MX-Legal officer or JSO were to leave government service and enter practice in a private law firm, their prior family law experience should be taken into account. This could be assessed on a case-by-case basis if they were to apply for the Family Law scheme. It would be up to the individual candidate to maintain their own records and case numbers of the family law work that they have engaged in within the relevant years prior to application, which could then be presented to the selection panel based on an honour system.

### Naming of tiers

- 4.19 While the Subcommittee recommends adhering to a two-tier framework in the same manner as the existing schemes (*i.e.*, a senior tier requiring at least ten PQE, and a junior tier requiring at least five PQE), it recommends that the tiers be designated “*Advanced Accredited Specialist*” (as opposed to “Senior Accredited Specialist”) for the more advanced family law practitioners, and “Accredited Specialist” (unchanged) for those with less experience.
- 4.20 The primary reason for the change in nomenclature is that the term “senior” may cause confusion between family lawyers who have been *in practice* for a long time, and lawyers who have been *practicing family law* for a long time. It was noted that some senior lawyers venture into family law only in the later part of their practice, and may not necessarily have an advanced level of experience in the practice area.
- 4.21 The proposed naming scheme for the tiers is similar to that of the Law Society of England and Wales, which has a “Family Law Accreditation” and a “Family Law Advanced Accreditation”.<sup>12</sup>

### Reaccreditation cycle

- 4.22 The existing schemes utilise a two-year reaccreditation cycle (*i.e.*, after initial accreditation, specialists must apply for reaccreditation every two years). For the Family Law scheme, the Subcommittee recommends a slightly longer reaccreditation cycle of three years. A two-year cycle is too short given that certain aspects of the recommended substantial involvement criteria for the Family Law scheme, such as the requirement for a candidate’s involvement in particular contested hearings or trials and mediations, are more detailed and specific than those for the existing schemes, and may therefore require a longer reaccreditation cycle to complete. On the other hand, a cycle that is longer than three years may pose challenges in ensuring that the specialist is up to date on the developments in family law, and may be insufficient to ensure continued substantial involvement in family law and currency in their advocacy experience.

## 5. *Pro tempore* selection panel

- 5.1 As with the other accreditation programmes, a *pro tempore* selection panel (“panel”) will be constituted for the first year that the Family Law accreditation programme is offered under the Scheme.

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<sup>12</sup> See The Law Society of England and Wales, “Family Law Accreditation” <<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/family-law-accreditation>> and “Family Law Advanced Accreditation” <<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/family-law-advanced-accreditation>> (accessed 4 June 2025).

- 5.2 The panel will be responsible for reviewing applications, interviewing candidates and recommending to the Specialist Accreditation Board (“**SAB**”) candidates for accreditation.
- 5.3 This five-member panel is expected to be headed by a judge, and includes professionals from relevant government, industry, and/or academic institutions to ensure that the selection process is fair.
- 5.4 For subsequent runs of the accreditation programme after the first year, the selection panel will comprise professionals from the aforementioned bodies.

## 6. Timelines

- 6.1 The following is the tentative schedule for the Family Law scheme for 2026:

Date	Event
<b>OLY 2026</b>	Accredited Specialist (“ <b>AS</b> ”) applications open
<b>End-May</b>	AS applications close 5pm
<b>Start-Jul</b>	AS candidature confirmed
<b>Start-Jul</b>	AS examination registration opens
<b>Start-Jul</b>	Advanced Accredited Specialist (“ <b>AAS</b> ”) applications open
<b>End-Aug</b>	AS examination registration closes
<b>End-Aug</b>	AAS applications close 5pm
<b>End-Sep</b>	AAS candidature confirmed
<b>First Saturday of Sep</b>	AS examination
<b>End-Oct / Start-Nov</b>	Selection panel interview
<b>OLY 2027</b>	Results released

- 6.2 This above proposed schedule for 2026 is meant to allow more time for applicants to prepare their applications for the new Scheme. For subsequent accreditation cycles for the Scheme, it would be preferable to follow the usual schedules set out by the schemes in existing practice areas (*i.e.*, for Accredited Specialist applications to close in end-March rather than in end-May).

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Subcommittee thanks the SAB for the opportunity to present its recommendations through this report and would be happy to consider any comments or suggestions that the SAB may have.
- 7.2 In preparing this report, the Subcommittee would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions and input from:
- a. the FJC, including:
    - i. District Judge Chia Wee Kiat, Deputy Presiding Judge of the FJC;
    - ii. District Judge Kenneth Yap, Registrar of the FJC;
    - iii. District Judge Marcus Ho;
    - iv. Magistrate Allen Chong; and
  - b. the SAL Secretariat, including:
    - i. Delphine Loo, Senior Director, Learning & Professional Development;
    - ii. Tan Xiao Wen, Senior Deputy Director, Learning & Professional Development;
    - iii. Gillian Chee, Senior Assistant Director, Learning & Professional Development;  
and
    - iv. Brandon Lim, Legal Specialist, Learning & Professional Development.

Dated this 26 November 2025.

**Chairperson of the Subcommittee**



**Justice Teh Hwee Hwee**  
Presiding Judge  
Family Justice Courts

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## Appendix A. Specialist accreditation and reaccreditation framework for Singapore Family Law

A.1 The accreditation programme will be in Family Law.

### Accreditation framework

#### Baseline criteria for all candidates

A.2 Candidates must satisfy the following baseline eligibility criteria to have their candidature confirmed:

- a. Admitted to the Singapore Bar as an Advocate and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore
- b. Hold a currently valid practising certificate
- c. Have a minimum full-time post-qualification experience (PQE)
- d. Have not been subject to professional disciplinary proceedings or charged and convicted of a serious crime
- e. Have been substantially involved in the full-time practice of Family Law
- f. Have been engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) in Family Law
- g. Have undergone and completed the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme
- h. Provide favourable reference statements

#### Accredited Specialist

##### Baseline criteria

A.3 **Post-qualification experience (baseline criterion (c))**

Legal practitioners should have at least **five years** of full-time PQE.

A.4 **Substantial involvement (baseline criterion (e))**

- (l) Candidates must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to application, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a **minimum 600 hours** to Family Law practice **per year**.

“Family Law practice” refers to practice in the following Core Areas and Other Areas:

##### **Core Areas**

- a. Divorce, judicial separation, nullity and ancillary matters under Part 10 of the Women’s Charter 1961 (“**Charter**”);
- b. Custody and guardianship under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed) or wardship under s 17(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act 1969 (2020 Rev Ed) read with s 22(1)(a) of the Family Justice Act 2014 (2020 Rev Ed);
- c. Maintenance and enforcement of such maintenance under Parts 8 and 9 of the Charter;
- d. Protection against family violence under Part 7 of the Charter;

**Other Areas**

- e. Adoption under the Adoption of Children Act 2022 (2020 Rev Ed);
- f. Probate and administration under the Probate and Administration Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed);
- g. Proceedings under the Mental Capacity Act 2008 (2020 Rev Ed); and
- h. Care and protection orders, family guidance orders, or cases involving youth offenders under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993 (2020 Rev Ed).

For the avoidance of doubt, Family Law practice must include work done in at least the Core Areas. Work undertaken in Other Areas may also be counted toward the 600-hour requirement, but practice in these areas alone, without corresponding experience in the Core Areas, would not satisfy the requirement.

- (II) Candidates must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to application, they have been involved in at least:
- a. Four out of six categories of contested hearings / trials as set out in the table below; and
  - b. Ten mediations
- as lead counsel or second chair.

S/N	Categories	No. required
1.	Contested trial for divorce, judicial separation or nullity under Chapters 1, 2 or 3 of Part 10 of the Women's Charter 1961 (the "Charter")	1
2.	Contested hearings or trials in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Family violence matters</li> <li>(ii) Maintenance matters</li> <li>(iii) Matters under the Probate and Administration Act 1934</li> <li>(iv) Matters under the Mental Capacity Act 2008</li> <li>(v) Matters under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993</li> <li>(vi) Enforcement processes</li> </ul>	2
3.	Contested hearings in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Applications under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934</li> <li>(ii) Variation of orders of ancillary reliefs</li> <li>(iii) Interim custody, care and control applications under the Charter</li> </ul>	3
4.	Other contested hearings of family matters in the Family Justice Courts / Family Division of the High Court, including interlocutory applications, e.g., hearing of discovery and interrogatories, <i>forum non conveniens</i> applications	5
5.	Appeals in the Family Division of the High Court / Appellate Division of the High Court / Court of Appeal	1
6.	Ancillary matters (Chapter 4 of Part 10 of the Charter) hearings / Financial Relief (Chapter 4A of Part 10 of the Charter) hearings	5

For the purposes of showing involvement in the required number of hearings as stipulated within each category as required in A.4(II)(a) above, a candidate's

involvement as lead counsel in a matter will be treated as the equivalent to a candidate's involvement as second chair in two matters in the same category. For example, if there is a requirement to be involved in three contested hearings, the candidate may achieve the same by:

- a. Being second chair in three contested hearings;
- b. Being lead counsel in one contested hearing (which is equivalent to being second chair in two contested hearings), and second chair in one contested hearing; or
- c. Being lead counsel in two contested hearings (which is equivalent to being second chair in four contested hearings).

A candidate's involvement in his or her appointment as a Mediator, Parenting Coordinator, or Child Representative, or in his or her representation as a Collaborative Family Practitioner, may count toward his or her fulfilment of the required number of mediations.

**A.5 Continuing professional development (baseline criterion (f))**

In the immediate **three years** prior to application, candidates must have accumulated at least **six public and / or private SILE CPD points a year** in family law.

**A.6 Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme (baseline criterion (g))**

Candidates must have completed the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme ("FTJCP").

Candidates who have completed an equivalent course may be considered for exemption on a case-by-case basis. Such courses must demonstrate parity in content, scope and objectives with the FTJCP.

**A.7 References (baseline criterion (h))**

Candidates shall be required to submit two favourable reference statements from family lawyers who can attest to the candidates' involvement and competence in the specialisation, and their character.

Referees cannot be relatives of the candidate, judges of the Singapore Courts, personnel of the same law practice as, or employer of, the candidate, or members of the selection panel.

Candidates cannot provide references for each other.

Assessment criteria

**A.8 Examination**

Candidates must sit for and pass an open-book examination which shall test their knowledge on aspects of family law and processes (see Appendix B).

**A.9 Selection panel interview**

Candidates who achieve a satisfactory examination grade are thereafter required to undergo a selection panel interview (see Appendix B).

The interview will be conducted by a panel of three assessors with expertise in Family Law.

**Advanced Accredited Specialist**

Baseline criteria

**A.10 Post-qualification experience (PQE) (baseline criterion (c))**

Legal practitioners should have at least **ten years** of full-time PQE.

**A.11 Substantial involvement (baseline criterion (e))**

- (l) Candidates must confirm that, in the immediate five years prior to application, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a minimum 800 hours to family law practice per year.

“Family Law practice” refers to practice in the following Core Areas and Other Areas:

**Core Areas**

- a. Divorce, judicial separation, nullity and ancillary matters under Part 10 of the Women’s Charter 1961 (“**Charter**”);
- b. Custody and guardianship under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed) or wardship under s 17(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act 1969 (2020 Rev Ed) read with s 22(1)(a) of the Family Justice Act 2014 (2020 Rev Ed);
- c. Maintenance and enforcement of such maintenance under Parts 8 and 9 of the Charter;
- d. Protection against family violence under Part 7 of the Charter;

**Other Areas**

- e. Adoption under the Adoption of Children Act 2022 (2020 Rev Ed);
- f. Probate and administration under the Probate and Administration Act 1934 (2020 Rev Ed);
- g. Proceedings under the Mental Capacity Act 2008 (2020 Rev Ed); and
- h. Care and protection orders, family guidance orders, or cases involving youth offenders under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993 (2020 Rev Ed).

For the avoidance of doubt, Family Law practice must include work done in at least the Core Areas. Work undertaken in Other Areas may also be counted toward the 800-hour requirement, but practice in these areas alone, without corresponding experience in the Core Areas, would not satisfy the requirement.

- (II) Candidates must confirm that, in the immediate **five years** prior to application, they have been involved in at least:
- a. Four out of six categories of contested hearings / trials as set out in the table below; and
  - b. 20 mediations
- as lead counsel or second chair, and
- c. an additional six contested hearings / trials across any of the categories identified in the table below as lead counsel.

S/N	Categories	No. required
1.	Contested trial for divorce, judicial separation or nullity under Chapters 1, 2 or 3 of Part 10 of the Women's Charter 1961 (the " <b>Charter</b> ")	1
2.	Contested hearings or trials in relation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Family violence matters</li> <li>(ii) Maintenance matters</li> <li>(iii) Matters under the Probate and Administration Act 1934</li> <li>(iv) Matters under the Mental Capacity Act 2008</li> <li>(v) Matters under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993</li> <li>(vi) Enforcement processes</li> </ol>	2
3.	Contested hearings in relation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(iv) Applications under the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934</li> <li>(v) Variation of orders of ancillary reliefs</li> <li>(vi) Interim custody, care and control applications under the Charter</li> </ol>	3
4.	Other contested hearings of family matters in the Family Justice Courts / Family Division of the High Court, including interlocutory applications, e.g., hearing of discovery and interrogatories, <i>forum non conveniens</i> applications	5
5.	Appeals in the Family Division of the High Court / Appellate Division of the High Court / Court of Appeal	1
6.	Ancillary matters (Chapter 4 of Part 10 of the Charter) hearings / Financial Relief (Chapter 4A of Part 10 of the Charter) hearings	5

For the purposes of showing involvement in the required number of hearings as stipulated within each category as required in (a), a candidate's involvement as lead counsel in a matter will be treated as the equivalent to a candidate's involvement as second chair in two matters in the same category. For example, if there is a requirement to be involved in three contested hearings, the candidate may achieve the same by:

- a. Being second chair in three contested hearings;
- b. Being lead counsel in one contested hearing (which is equivalent to being second chair in two contested hearings), and second chair in one contested hearing; or
- c. Being lead counsel in two contested hearings (which is equivalent to being second chair in four contested hearings).

A candidate's involvement in his or her appointment as a Mediator, Parenting Coordinator, or Child Representative, or in his or her representation as a Collaborative Family Practitioner, may count toward his or her fulfilment of the required number of mediations.

**A.12 Continuing professional development (baseline criterion (f))**

In the immediate **five years** prior to application, candidates must have accumulated at least **six public and / or private CPD points a year** in family law.

**A.13 Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme (baseline criterion (g))**

Candidates must have completed the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme ("FTJCP").

Candidates who have completed an equivalent course may be considered for exemption by the selection panel on a case-by-case basis. Such courses must demonstrate parity in content, scope and objectives with the FTJCP.

**A.14 References (baseline criterion (h))**

Candidates shall be required to submit two supporting reference statements from family lawyers who can attest to the candidates' involvement and competence in the specialisation, and their character.

Referees cannot be relatives of the candidate, judges of the Singapore Courts, personnel of the same law practice or employer as the candidate, or members of the selection panel.

Candidates cannot provide references for each other.

Assessment criteria

**A.15 Selection panel interview**

The interview will be conducted by a panel of three assessors with expertise in Family Law (see Appendix B).

**Accreditation post-nominals and validity**

**A.16 Candidates who are accredited may include the following post-nominals:**

Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law

or

Adv. Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law

**A.17 The validity of specialist accreditation for family law is three years, after which specialists must apply for reaccreditation.**

## Reaccreditation framework

### Accredited Specialist

#### A.18 Substantial involvement and continuing professional development

Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a **minimum 600 hours** to family law practice **per year**.

Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, they have been involved in at least:

- a. Four out of six categories of contested hearings / trials as set out in the table at paragraph A.4 above; and
- b. Ten mediations

as lead counsel or second chair.

As was the case in paragraph A.4, for the purposes of showing involvement in the required number of hearings as stipulated within each category as required in (a), a candidate's involvement as lead counsel in a matter will be treated as the equivalent to a candidate's involvement as second chair in two matters in the same category.

A candidate's involvement in his or her appointment as a Mediator, Parenting Coordinator, or Child Representative, or in his or her representation as a Collaborative Family Practitioner, may count toward his or her fulfilment of the required number of mediations.

In the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, Accredited Specialists must have accumulated at least **six public and / or private SILE CPD points a year** in family law.

#### A.19 Panel interview

If the selection panel deems it necessary, Accredited Specialists may be required to attend a panel interview.

### Advanced Accredited Specialist

#### A.20 Substantial involvement and continuing professional development

Advanced Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a **minimum 800 hours** to family law practice **per year**.

Advanced Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, they have been involved in at least:

- a. Six contested hearings / trials across any of the categories identified in the table at paragraph A.11 above as lead counsel; and
- b. 20 mediations as lead counsel or second chair.

A candidate's involvement in his or her appointment as a Mediator, Parenting Coordinator, or Child Representative, or as representation as a Collaborative Family Practitioner, may count toward his or her fulfilment of the required number of mediations.

In the immediate **three years** prior to reaccreditation, Advanced Accredited Specialists must have accumulated at least **six public and / or private SILE CPD points a year** in family law.

A.21 **Panel interview**

If the selection panel deems it necessary, Advanced Accredited Specialists may be required to attend a panel interview.

## Appendix B. Examination and selection panel interview

### Examination

- B.1 Candidates who have applied to be Accredited Specialists must sit for and pass a written open-book examination.
- B.2 Candidates will be examined on a selection of topics which will focus on the practical aspects of family law. The selection of topics will depend on topical areas in a given year, and will be subject to periodic updates over a two- to three-year cycle to keep pace with developments in the field. The examination will take the form of written responses to hypothetical factual scenarios with the content and style appropriate to written submissions. This format is intended to assess candidates' practical ability to analyse and respond to realistic family law scenarios, rather than to replicate the full process of preparing written submission in actual proceedings. The examination will highlight issues covering the Core Areas of family law practice as identified at paragraph 2.1 of the report, and aims to test the maturity of candidates' responses, as well as candidates' ability to apply the law to the facts and to show practical sense in their approach to cases. The examination would differ from the Singapore Institute of Legal Education's ("SILE's") Part B examinations, as they would be focused on how candidates would present a case to the court, and do not just test legal knowledge and application.
- B.3 The examination should be administered by the SAL. A faculty assembled by the SAL ("**Faculty**") has been assembled to teach a structured training programme in substantive family law (tentatively titled the "*Advanced Family Law Course*"). The Faculty will also be tasked with setting the examination questions for the Family Law scheme, and subsequently marking the candidates' answer scripts. The Faculty is comprised of family law academics from local universities in Singapore and experienced family law practitioners who are experienced in teaching / setting family law examination questions (e.g., for other professional qualification examinations, such as the SILE's Part B examinations).
- B.4 The candidates attain the overall pass mark of **60%** before they are considered to have passed the examination.

### Selection panel interview

- B.5 Accredited Specialist candidates who pass the examination and Advanced Accredited Specialist candidates must attend a selection panel interview.
- B.6 The selection panel should have a minimum of five members and should comprise FJC judges, senior family law academics, and / or senior representatives from the Legal Aid Bureau of the Ministry of Law. Family law practitioners should not be part of the selection panel. Every selection panel interview should be conducted by three members with at least one FJC judge present. SAL shall consult with the Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts for the composition of the selection panel.
- B.7 The questions for the selection panel interviews should be set by the selection panel. The interview questions should be designed to assess whether the candidate would meet the standards of a Family Law Specialist and whether the candidate possesses the interpersonal /

communication skills and emotional maturity befitting of a Family Law Specialist, and may include questions regarding:

- a. Details of the candidates' practices;
- b. The candidates' understanding of and opinions on the latest family law cases;
- c. The candidates' understanding of and opinions on any relevant new legislation or practice directions;
- d. The candidates' experiences utilising the TJ Model / views on the TJ Model.

## Appendix C. Approaches to recognising Family Law competence in other jurisdictions

### Australia

#### New South Wales (“NSW”)<sup>13</sup>

- C.1 The NSW specialist accreditation scheme was instituted in 1992. Specialist accreditation is offered across 14 areas of practice, including Family Law, on a biennial basis.
- C.2 Candidates are required to have at least five years of PQE, and must have been engaged in family law practice for three years immediately preceding application (consisting of not less than 25% of their full-time practice).
- C.3 While there is no CPD involvement requirement for initial accreditation, candidates are required to submit three references and a letter of support from their most recent supervisor. Candidates must also pass an assessment, consisting of:
- a. a mock file (including a letter to client and document drafting);
  - b. a written examination; and
  - c. a simulated interview.
- C.4 Once successfully accredited, a candidate may hold themselves out as an “Accredited Specialist in Family Law”. There are other allowed variations, including:
- a. Accredited Specialist – Family Law
  - b. Accredited Specialist (Family Law)
  - c. Acc. Spec. (Family Law)
  - d. Acc. Spec. (Fam)
- C.5 Accreditation must be renewed annually. For reaccreditation, Accredited Specialists must fulfil a minimum substantial involvement in family law practice (consisting of not less than 25% of their full-time practice) within the preceding year. Accredited Specialists must also obtain ten CPD points in family law within the preceding year, which must be counted separately from the CPD points required for Practising Certificate (“PC”) renewal.

#### Queensland<sup>14</sup>

- C.6 The Queensland specialist accreditation scheme was established in 1995. Queensland recognises 11 areas of specialty, but only offers specialist accreditation programmes across eight areas of practice, including Family Law. Not all areas of practice are open for application every year.
- C.7 Candidates are required to have at least five years of PQE, and must have been engaged in the delivery of legal services in family law equivalent to at least 25% of ordinary full-time legal practice during the three years immediately preceding application.

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<sup>13</sup> Information obtained from The Law Society of New South Wales, “Specialist Accreditation” <<https://www.lawsociety.com.au/specialist-accreditation>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Information obtained from the Queensland Law Society, “Specialist Accreditation” <<https://www.qls.com.au/Education/Specialist-Accreditation>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

- C.8 While there is no CPD involvement requirement for initial accreditation, candidates are required to submit three references. Candidates must also pass an assessment, consisting of:
- a. a take-home assessment;
  - b. a written examination; and
  - c. an oral assessment.
- C.9 Once successfully accredited, a candidate may hold themselves out as an “Accredited Specialist in Family Law”. There are other allowed variations, including:
- a. Accredited Specialist – Family Law
  - b. Accredited Specialist (Family Law)
  - c. AccS(Fam)
- C.10 Accreditation must be renewed annually. For reaccreditation, Accredited Specialists must fulfil a minimum substantial involvement in family law practice (consisting of not less than 25% of their full-time practice) within the preceding year. Accredited Specialists must also obtain five CPD points annually (in addition to the ten CPD points required for PC renewal, *i.e.*, a total of 15 points per CPD year), where a minimum of ten CPD points must be in family law.
- C.11 For the first three CPD years following accreditation, reaccreditation reports must be submitted, setting out CPD activities undertaken. Otherwise, reaccreditation reports are only requested at random during annual audits.

Victoria<sup>15</sup>

- C.12 The Victoria Accredited Specialisation programme was the first Australian accreditation programme, with the first batch of specialists (which was in Family Law) accredited in 1989.<sup>16</sup> Specialist accreditation is offered across 16 areas of practice. Certain practice areas (including Family Law) are offered on a biennial basis, while certain practice areas are offered subject to sufficient interest in applications.
- C.13 Candidates are required to have at least five years of PQE, and must have been engaged in legal work in family law equivalent to at least 25% of the total workload of a full-time practitioners, equal to 460 hours per year, or ten hours per week.
- C.14 While there is no CPD involvement requirement for initial accreditation, candidates are required to submit three references. Candidates must also pass an assessment, consisting of:
- a. a take-home assignment (including letter of advice for client and preparation of court documents);
  - b. a written examination; and
  - c. a simulated interview with client.

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<sup>15</sup> Information obtained from Law Institute Victoria “Accredited Specialisation” <<https://www.liv.asn.au/specialisation?srsId=AfmBOoy7Cv72Dd6aU28trNh00kr8K3cU5ts5TBFZ4DQeQoH6rsZPKrS>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>16</sup> See Lauw, Inge “Specialisation, Accreditation and the Legal Profession in Australia and Canada” (1994), Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law at 6.4 <<https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/journals/MurdochUeJLaw/1994/11.html>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

- C.15 Once successfully accredited, a candidate may hold themselves out as an “Accredited Specialist in Family Law”. There are other allowed variations, including:
- a. Accredited Family Law Specialist
  - b. AccS(Fam)
- C.16 Accreditation must be renewed every three years. For reaccreditation, Accredited Specialists must fulfil a minimum substantial involvement in family law practice (consisting of not less than 25% of their full-time practice), considered to be equivalent to 460 hours, per year. Accredited Specialists must also obtain 12 CPD hours (eight of which must be in family law) per year.
- C.17 For the first three CPD years following accreditation, CPD Reports must be submitted, setting out CPD activities undertaken. Otherwise, CPD Reports can be requested:
- a. if selected as part of random audits;
  - b. when there are significant changes to the law;
  - c. when the Accredited Specialist has gone on a Leave of Absence; or
  - d. when the Accredited Specialist has had previous difficulty in complying with the reaccreditation criteria.

Western Australia<sup>17</sup>

- C.18 Western Australia’s Specialist Accreditation Programme accredited its first batch of specialists in 1992 (in Family Law).<sup>18</sup> Specialist accreditation is offered across two areas of practice (including Family Law).
- C.19 Candidates are required to have at least five years of PQE, and must have had a substantial involvement (of not less than 25% of their practice) in the practice of family law over the preceding three years.
- C.20 While there is no CPD involvement requirement for initial accreditation, candidates are required to submit three references. Candidates must also pass an assessment, consisting of:
- a. a take-home assignment (including letter of advice for client and preparation of court documents);
  - b. a written examination; and
  - c. a simulated interview with client.
- C.21 Accreditation must be renewed every three years. For reaccreditation, Accredited Specialists must fulfil a minimum substantial involvement in family law practice (consisting of not less than 25% of their full-time practice) per year. Accredited Specialists must also obtain ten CLE points in approved accreditation activities each year. A list of specific approved activities is provided on the Specialist Accreditation Programme’s website.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Information obtained from The Law Society of Western Australia “Accreditation” <<https://lawsocietywa.asn.au/learning/accreditation/>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>18</sup> See Lauw, Inge “Specialisation, Accreditation and the Legal Profession in Australia and Canada” (1994), Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law at 6.5 <<https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/journals/MurdochUeJLLaw/1994/11.html>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>19</sup> See for example, The Law Society of Western Australia, “Approved Accreditation Activities 2024-2025” <<https://lawsocietywa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2024-25-Approved-Accreditation-Activities-as-at-July-2025.pdf>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

## Canada

### Ontario<sup>20</sup>

- C.22 Ontario's Certified Specialist Program is offered across 17 areas of practice (including Family Law).
- C.23 Candidates are required to have at least seven years of PQE, two years of which must have been within Ontario. Candidates must also have at least five years of recent experience in family law (consisting of a minimum of 30% of practice concentration), including:
- a. carriage of at least 15 complex matters of substances, at least some of which were resolved after a court proceeding was commenced or through arbitration (case analyses for ten matters must be provided);
  - b. advice of clients with respect to specific issues / matters (across a number of broad categories of family law); and
  - c. experience in the use of specific alternative dispute mechanisms (including mediation, arbitration, and formal court proceedings).<sup>21</sup>
- C.24 In terms of CPD requirements, candidates must have obtained at least 50 hours of self-study over the preceding two years (in addition to the 12 hours of mandatory professional development requirement) and in one additional year within the five years of recent experience.
- C.25 Four references must be provided. Candidates are not required to pass an assessment.
- C.26 Once successfully accredited, a candidate may hold themselves out as a "Certified Specialist (Family Law)", or simply, "C.S.".
- C.27 Accreditation must be renewed annually with the submission of a Certification Annual Report. Certified Specialists must submit a declaration and summary of any outstanding claims or matters involving the specialist's practice. Certified Specialists must also complete ten hours of CPD in family law, in addition to the annual mandatory 12 hours of CPD.

## United Kingdom

### England & Wales<sup>22</sup>

- C.28 England and Wales offers accreditations across 12 broad areas of law, and offers two distinct tiers of Family Law accreditation: a Family Law Accreditation<sup>23</sup>, and a Family Law Advanced Accreditation.<sup>24</sup>
- C.29 For both tiers, candidates are implicitly required to have a minimum of three years of PQE, based on the practice experience required for each tier. For Family Law Accreditation, candidates must

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<sup>20</sup> Information obtained from Law Society of Ontario, "Certified Specialists" <<https://lso.ca/lawyers/about-your-licence/manage-your-licence/certified-specialists>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>21</sup> See Law Society of Ontario, "Certified Specialist Program Standards of Certification Family Law" <<https://lawsocietyontario-dwd0dscmayfwh7bj.a01.azurefd.net/media/lso/media/lawyers/certified-specialist/csp07-familystandardsforcertification.pdf>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>22</sup> Information obtained from the Law Society of England and Wales, "Individual accreditations" <<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>23</sup> Information obtained from the Law Society of England and Wales, "Family Law Accreditation" <<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/family-law-accreditation>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>24</sup> Information obtained from the Law Society of England and Wales, "Family Law Advanced Accreditation" <<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/family-law-advanced-accreditation>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

be solicitors or chartered legal executives with 1,000 hours of general litigation experience over the last three years and 350 hours of family law experience in each of the last two years.

- C.30 For Family Law Advanced Accreditation, candidates must be solicitors or chartered legal executives with 550 hours of family law work in each of the last three years. Candidates for Family Law Advanced Accreditation are also expected to have general knowledge and awareness of family law, as well as the law outside of family law (including, e.g., the law in relation to wills and transfers of property). Family Law Advanced Accreditation candidates must also have in-depth knowledge and understanding of at least two areas out of a specified list of areas.<sup>25</sup>
- C.31 Both tiers require candidates to have completed six hours of structured Professional Development (“PD”) in the preceding year. No references are required.
- C.32 While the Family Law Accreditation does not require candidates to pass an assessment, the Family Law Advanced Accreditation requires candidates to:
- a. have passed the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (“CILEX”) part two examinations in family law and practice; and
  - b. complete set case studies (set scenario and questions based on modules selected by the candidate).
- C.33 Accreditation must be renewed every five years. For reaccreditation, Family Law Specialists must fulfil a minimum substantial involvement in family law practice of at least 350 hours in family law in each of the last five years, with the submission of four case reports derived from concluded / completed cases. Family Law Advanced Specialists must submit two case reports on cases that the candidate has personally conducted within the last two years. Both tiers are required to complete six hours of structured PD in family law per year.

#### Scotland<sup>26</sup>

- C.34 Scotland offers accreditations across 32 areas of practice, including Family Law. Compared to the other jurisdictions, the requirements for the Scottish scheme are relatively less stringent.
- C.35 Candidates are implicitly required to have a minimum of five years of PQE, based on practice experience required: candidates must have been engaged in a broad spectrum of practice in the family law field throughout a five-year period under review. Ten cases or matters of noted must be submitted for review.
- C.36 Two references must be provided. There are no CPD requirements, and candidates are also not required to pass an assessment.
- C.37 Accreditation must be renewed every five years. For reaccreditation, Family Law Specialists should keep note of any interesting cases / authorship / presentations throughout the five-year period of their accreditation to assist with the application of their renewal.

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<sup>25</sup> This includes children law private, child abduction and wardship, cohabitation, violence in the home, advice in and conduct of ancillary relief, international issues, and complex asset cases.

<sup>26</sup> Information obtained from Law Society of Scotland, “Accredited Specialisms” <<https://www.lawsco.org.uk/members/career-growth/specialisms/>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

## United States of America

### California<sup>27</sup>

- C.38 California offers the State Bar Legal Specialization program, and offers certifications across 11 areas of practice, including Family Law. The program was the first of its kind in the United States of America, and has served as a model for other state programs for certifying legal specialists.
- C.39 Candidates are required to have at least five years of PQE, and must have substantial experience in the field of family law (*i.e.*, must have practiced law continuously for at least five years, spending at least 25% of the time given to occupational endeavours practicing in family law).
- C.40 In terms of CPD requirements, candidates must have completed at least 45 hours of specifically approved educational activities for family law within the three years immediately preceding application.<sup>28</sup>
- C.41 Candidates are required to submit favourable evaluations by other attorneys and judges familiar with the candidate's work in family law. Candidates must also pass a written examination covering California family law.
- C.42 Once successfully accredited, a candidate may hold themselves out as a "Certified Family Law Specialist", or "CFLS".
- C.43 Accreditation must be renewed every five years. For reaccreditation, Certified Family Law Specialists must fulfil and report their compliance of certain task and experience and reference requirements. This includes participation in a total of 50 family law proceedings (including contested hearings or trial proceedings, and negotiated or mediated settlements or agreements), and at least 60 hours of educational activities specifically approved for family law (of which between six to ten hours must be in psychological and counselling aspects of family law).

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<sup>27</sup> Information obtained from the State Bar of California, "Legal Specialization" <<https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Attorneys/Legal-Specialization>> (accessed 21 July 2025).

<sup>28</sup> See the State Bar of California, "The Standards for Certification and Recertification in Family Law" <[https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/rules/Rules\\_Title3\\_Div2-Ch2\\_LegSpec\\_Family.pdf](https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/rules/Rules_Title3_Div2-Ch2_LegSpec_Family.pdf)> (accessed 21 July 2025).

END

## **ADDENDUM**

The recommendations of the Family Law Subcommittee as contained in their Report dated 26 November 2025 are accepted and approved by the Specialist Accreditation Board (the “SAB”), subject to the following:

### **1. Naming of tiers**

- a. The SAB prefers to maintain the existing nomenclature of “Accredited Specialist”, or “AS”, and “Senior Accredited Specialist”, or “SAS”, for consistency with the other existing practice areas in the Specialist Accreditation Scheme.
- b. The accreditation title for Accredited Specialists in Family Law will be: Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law / Acc. Spec. (Family), SAL / AS (FAM).
- c. The accreditation title for Senior Accredited Specialists in Family Law will be: Snr. Acc. Spec. (Family), Singapore Academy of Law / Snr. Acc. Spec. (Family), SAL / SAS (FAM).

### **2. Substantial involvement: minimum hours of practice**

- a. The SAB prefers to maintain the existing minimum number of hours of practice required for substantial involvement of 450 hours per year for Accredited Specialists in Family Law and 600 hours per year for Senior Accredited Specialists in Family Law.
- b. *Accreditation criteria:*
  - i. Referring to paragraph A.4 at Appendix A of the Report, Accredited Specialist candidates must confirm that, in the immediate three years prior to application, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a minimum 450 hours to Family Law practice per year.
  - ii. Referring to paragraph A.11 at Appendix A of the Report, Senior Accredited Specialist candidates must confirm that, in the immediate

five years prior to application, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a minimum 600 hours to Family Law practice per year.

c. *Reaccreditation criteria:*

- i. Referring to paragraph A.18 at Appendix A of the Report, Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate three years prior to reaccreditation, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a minimum 450 hours to Family Law practice per year.
- ii. Referring to paragraph A.20 at Appendix A of the Report, Accredited Specialists must confirm that, in the immediate three years prior to reaccreditation, they have been engaged in full-time practice and have dedicated a minimum 600 hours to Family Law practice per year.

The Family Law Subcommittee has no objections to the above.

The SAB approves all other recommendations of the Report.

Dated this 26th day of February, 2026

**Signed:**



**Justice Kannan Ramesh**

Chair, SAB