

Letters to the editor

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A tip for candidate attorneys applying to be admitted as an attorney

I received a letter from the Law Society of the Northern Provinces (LSNP) informing me that I had to pay membership fees in the amount of R 3 021 for the 2015 financial year as I had been admitted in May. I assumed that this was a typographical error and contacted the LSNP to confirm same. They informed me that I indeed had to pay R 3 021 for the 2015 financial year ending on 30 June 2015 and that I would again have to pay the same amount for the 2016 financial year. This begs the question as to how it can be expected of a newly admitted attorney to pay such a substantial amount for being admitted for a period of two months.

The LSNP subsequently informed me that they no longer calculate the membership fees for newly admitted attorneys on a *pro rata* basis. I fail to understand why we should be paying membership fees for a period in which we were not practicing as admitted attorneys. This is clearly a disadvantage and unfair practice to any newly admitted attorney (who arguably are not earning a substantial salary and still have, *inter alia*, student loans to pay off), especially those that are admitted closer to the end of the financial year. Therefore, my advice to any candidate attorneys who are drafting their applications to be admitted, attempt to get a date as close to the new financial year as possible and save R 3 021.

Anjelica Chedraoui, attorney, Klerksdorp

Response from the LSNP

I refer to the letter from Ms Chedraoui and wish to confirm that it is in fact correct that a special concession had previously been made by the Council of the Law Society of the Northern Provinces (LSNP) to newly admitted attorneys in that attorneys, who were for the first time admitted and for a period of less than six months of the financial year of the LSNP, commencing on 1 July of each year (ie, from 1 January until 30 June), were only held liable for half of the amount of annual subscriptions payable by its members.

This concession was, however, withdrawn approximately three years ago, as part of cost saving measures, which became necessary for the LSNP, due to its drastically reduced income. I am, however, happy to report that the Council again reinstated the previous concession, effectively from 1 January 2015. The invoices issued to the members concerned, did not reflect the reduced amount and an appropriate adjustment will, therefore, be made to all newly admitted attorneys who became liable for the payment of such fees during the period 1 January 2015 until 30 June 2015 for the 2015/2016 financial year.

It has never been policy to allow members to pay membership fees on a *pro rata* basis and Council is of the view that the amount of annual membership fees payable by members of the LSNP, cannot be regarded as excessive for a practising attorney.

Thinus Grobler, Director, Law Society of the Northern Provinces, Pretoria