

Sheriff Principal 2026 – Frequently Asked Questions

JABS were asked to provide some clarity on several self-assessment sections with potential overlap, the following responses have been published for the benefit of all candidates.

8.13: Experience in Areas of Law. There are 8 sections here (2 criminal and 6 civil/other) with each allowing up to 300 words. This appears to have a broad sweep and is an opportunity to show a range of experience, rather than a request for a specific example in relation to each heading. Is that correct? Because there appears to be some overlap with 8.14 (below).

Response: Section 8.13 is intended to provide information on your experience across the areas of law listed and enhance the information provided in your career history. The purpose is to demonstrate the breadth and depth of your professional experience in each area, and you may draw on a range of matters, cases or work undertaken rather than focusing on a single example. These sections have a different purpose to 8.14/8.15 as candidates are not required to respond to set criteria, but instead should use this section to provide specific information on their legal experience.

Some overlap between sections is acceptable where aspects of your practice span multiple areas of law. However, you should tailor each response to the specific heading and avoid unnecessary repetition where possible.

8.14: Self-Assessment – Legal (Criterion 1). Is it correct that, after completion of the 8 sections on specific areas of law (above) and before 3 written examples of legal work of up to 1500 words - with each example accompanied by its own description of up to 300 words – there is an additional self-assessment of 1500 words requiring further specific examples to assess Criterion 1 – knowledge, interpretation and application of the law?

Yes, in addition to the eight sections at 8.13, the self-assessment at 8.14 provides a further opportunity to demonstrate how your experience evidences the different sub-criteria listed under Criterion 1: Knowledge, interpretation and application of the law. You should therefore provide competency-based evidence through the use of examples that explains not only the nature of the work you have undertaken, but how that work demonstrates the skills, judgement and legal expertise required by the criterion.

While there may be some overlap with the areas of law described in 8.13 and with the legal written work examples submitted elsewhere in the application, the purpose of 8.14 is to enable you to draw together the most relevant evidence and explain how it demonstrates your suitability against the sub-criteria under Criterion 1. You may refer to matters outlined elsewhere in your application where relevant, but your response should clearly articulate the knowledge, interpretation and application of the law that you personally exercised and the impact of your contribution.

8.14: Legal Written Work examples. As I understand the requirement, three examples of previous legal written work must be provided. Each example can be up to 1500 words, and there is an opportunity to give an explanation (of up to 300 words) to explain the context and background to each example. My query relates to the written pieces I propose to send which are each longer than 1500 words. Let me take the example of a written judgment. Is the preference that the whole judgment is provided, but the relevant 1500 words are highlighted (perhaps in yellow, as often happens with cases produced as authorities in civil cases)? Or is the preference that the judgment is cut with only 1500 words submitted?

Response: The approach here is a matter for the candidate. You may either submit an extract of up to 1,500 words from a longer piece of written work, or submit the full document with the most relevant section clearly identified.

There is no preference but the key consideration is that the material on which you wish to be assessed should be readily identifiable to the selection panel. If submitting a document that exceeds 1,500 words, you should make clear which section(s) you wish the panel to focus on, for example by highlighting the relevant passages or otherwise signposting them using the relevant section of up to 300 words. This accompanying section can also be used to provide any necessary context and to explain why the extract has been selected.

Candidates should also note that if selecting paragraphs or sections from a larger piece of work, care should be taken to preserve the meaning and purpose of the written work. The legal written work is also intended to provide evidence against the sub-criteria listed under Criterion 1, as well as provide evidence of ability to produce quality written work as outlined under Criterion 6: Communication Effectively. Extracting sections from a larger piece of work should not negatively impact on understanding or clarity of the content.