

# Mock Assessment Centre Written Exercise



@ITSALLHEARSAY

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# INTRODUCTION



Hello! I am Megan, an Associate at a London Law Firm and the Founder of It's All Hearsay.

Thank you for downloading the It's All Hearsay Mock Assessment Centre Written Exercise Guide.

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## **It's All Hearsay**

It's All Hearsay was created to offer help, guidance and motivation to all aspiring lawyers, apprentices, trainees and legal professionals.

If you don't already know, I found the journey to becoming a trainee solicitor hard. I constantly felt alone and that there was no information out there. Therefore, I want to make sure no one feels the way I did.

I believe there is certainly an art to getting this journey right and while mistakes and setbacks are unavoidable, I want to be a person who will help you to never give up. I also want to provide you with hints and tricks to get you there with a few less hiccups.

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## **About this resource**

I have put this resource together for all law students and applicants because assessment centres are notoriously hard within the industry.

This resource will give you an understanding of what a few different types of written exercises might look like, what points to consider, how to structure your answer and some helpful tips on what the assessors are looking for.



# WRITTEN EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

02

A usual written assessment will have the following instructions:

1

You will have 90 minutes to read the information enclosed.



2

Read the in-tray items carefully and decide which tasks require urgent attention and which can be dealt with at a later time.



3

Respond to each email in a clear and professional manner ensuring that you provide accurate and helpful information.



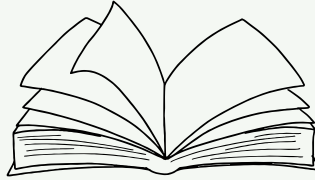
4

Prioritise your workload based on the urgency of each task and allocate your time accordingly.

**If you are comfortable with the instructions, please proceed to the information pack.**



# LIST OF IN-TRAY ITEMS



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You are a Trainee at ABC Law Firm, prioritise and respond to the following items:

1. Email from a senior partner requesting that you review and update a client file by the end of the day.
  2. Letter from a client requesting advice on a legal matter and requesting an urgent response.
  3. Email from a colleague requesting your assistance in drafting a witness statement for a court case that is due in two days.
  4. Voicemail from a client requesting an update on the progress of their case.
  5. Email from the office manager requesting that you attend a mandatory training session next week.
  6. Enquiry from a potential client requesting a call back.
  7. Email from the opposing counsel requesting that you attend a settlement conference in three days' time.
  8. Memo from a junior colleague requesting input on a draft contract that they have prepared.
  9. Alert from the firm's IT department requesting that you update your software by the end of the week.
  10. Letter from the court requesting that you file a bundle by the end of the day.
- 



## IN-TRAY ITEM 1

Start of in-tray items

## New Message



To Trainee

Subject Urgent Request to Review and Update Client File

I am writing to request that you urgently review and update the client file for Katy Perry. The deadline for this task is by the end of the day.

As you are aware, this client's matter is of great importance to the firm and we need to ensure that all documentation is up to date and accurate. Your prompt attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this request.

Jane Green  
Senior Partner



Send



## IN-TRAY ITEM 2

ABC Law Firm,  
110 Causeway, It's All Hearsay Road, E1 7AJ

Dear Trainee

19 March

I refer to your letter dated 11 March.

Please find enclosed documentation regarding a dispute between me and my neighbour in relation to our respective property boundaries.

This matter requires immediate attention and I would appreciate a prompt response.

If you could please provide me with your availability to discuss this matter further, I would be grateful. I can be reached at 07590124562.

Sincerely,



Sam Smith



## IN-TRAY ITEM 3

New message

← → ↻ ☆ ☰

To Trainee

---

Subject Assistance Needed for Witness Statement

---

I am writing to request your assistance in drafting a witness statement for a court case that is due in two days. The statement needs to be submitted by the end of the day tomorrow.

If you could please let me know your availability to discuss this further, I would be grateful.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Best regards,

Chris Toon  
Senior Associate

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Send



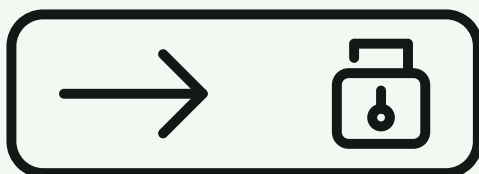


## IN-TRAY ITEM 4

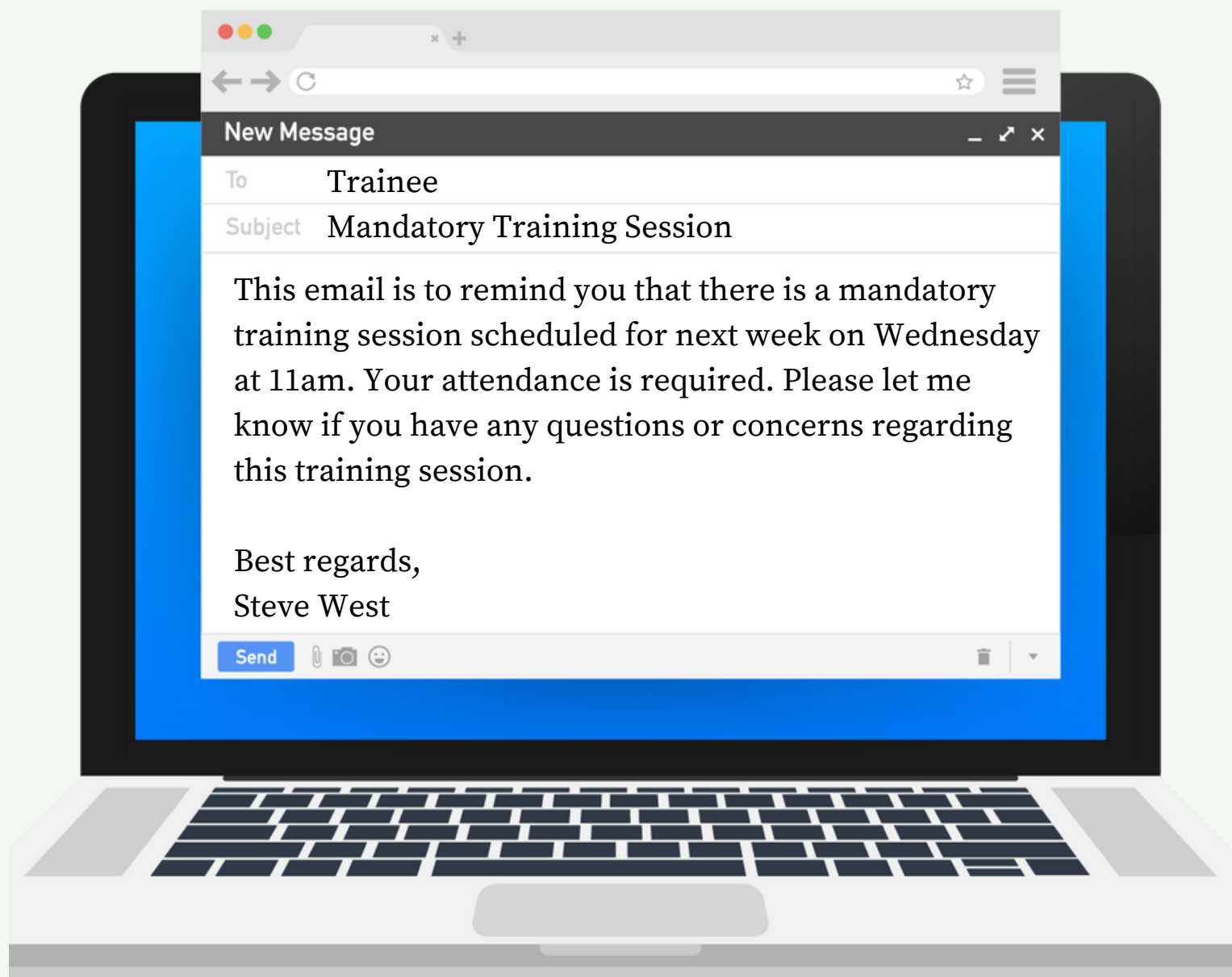


+44 7528 17356

Hi, it's James. We met today during the client meeting. I am calling to request an update on the progress of my case. If you could please email me or return my call, I would appreciate it. Thank you.



## IN-TRAY ITEM 5



# IN-TRAY ITEM 6



Dear Sir/Madam

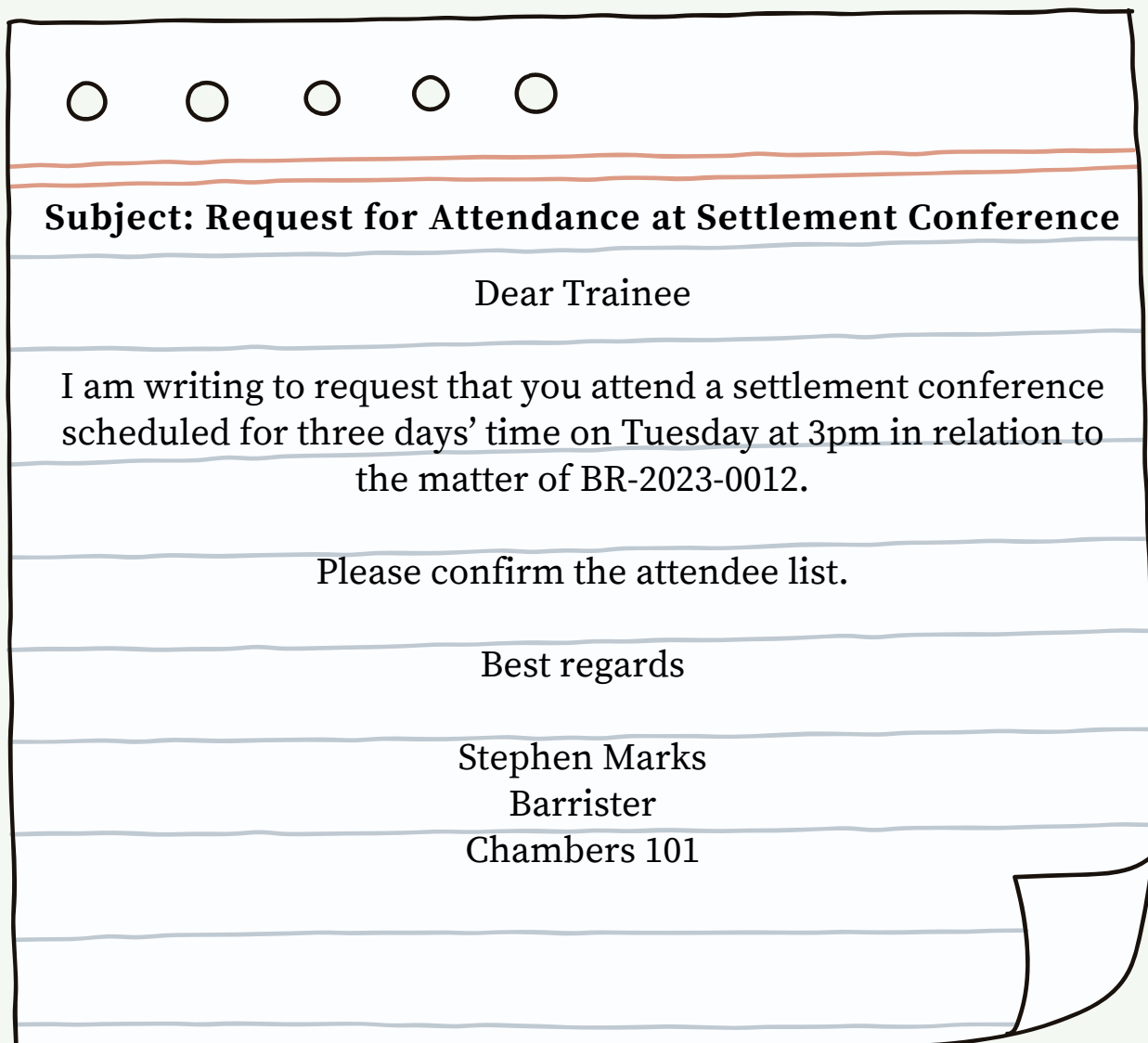
I have seen on the website that you offer insolvency services. I would like to make some enquiries and ask for your advice in relation to a bankruptcy.

Please email me at [w.longbottom@avivo.com](mailto:w.longbottom@avivo.com),  
at your earliest convenience.

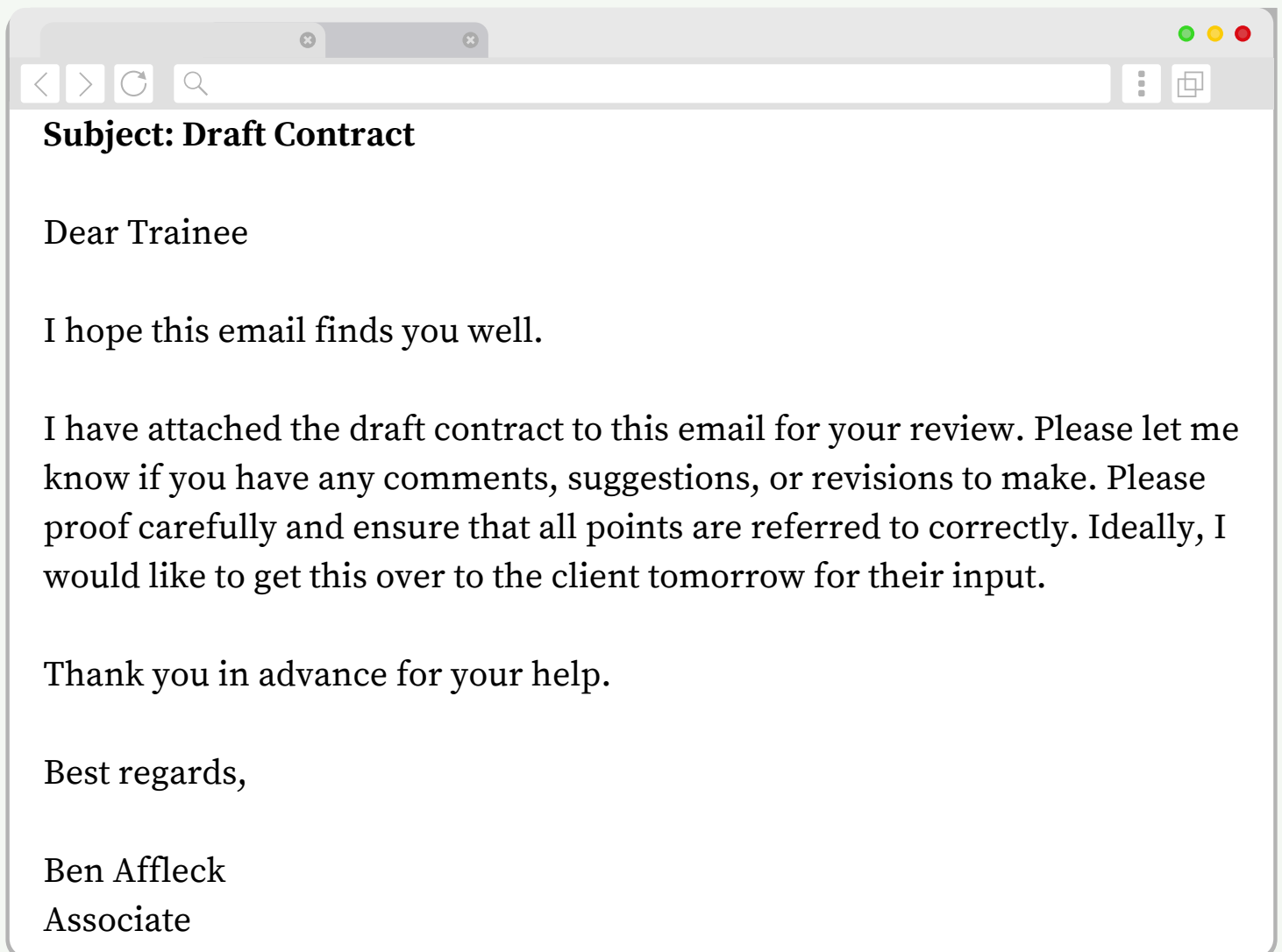
Wendy Longbottom  
Manger  
Avivo Limited



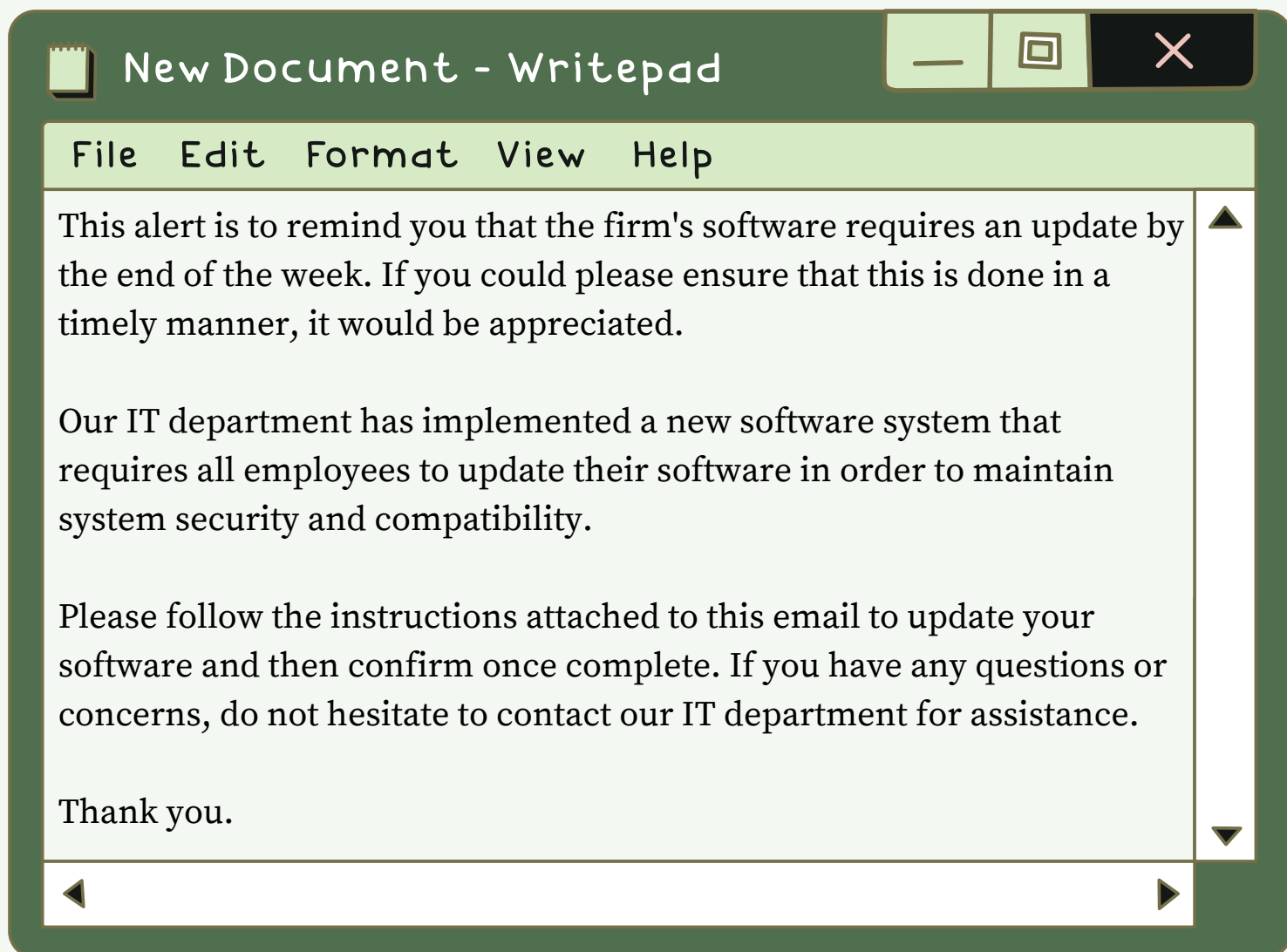
## IN-TRAY ITEM 7



## IN-TRAY ITEM 8



## IN-TRAY ITEM 9



## IN-TRAY ITEM 10

ABC Law Firm,  
110 Causeway, It's All Hearsay Road, E1 7AJ

Dear Trainee

25 March

I am writing to inform you that the court requires you to file a bundle of documents related to the case of CA-2023-01335 by the end of the day. Please note that failure to submit the required documents by the deadline may result in penalties.

The bundle should include all relevant pleadings, statements, and other documents that are necessary for the court to make a decision on the case. Please ensure that the documents are properly numbered and indexed, and that they are in the correct order.

If you require any assistance or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the court office.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ajib Hussain  
Court Clerk



# END OF IN-TRAY ITEMS

The next section is for your answers.

Space has been created for you to:

- input your chosen order of priority; and
- set out your written responses to each of the in-tray items.

Feel free to use the space, as you see fit.







# YOUR WRITTEN TASK RESPONSES

1	
2	

# YOUR RESPONSES

3	
4	

## YOUR RESPONSES

5	
6	

# YOUR RESPONSES

7	
8	

## YOUR RESPONSES

9

10

# HOW YOU WILL BE ASSESSED

Only progress to the next stage if you have had an idea about what you might like to say and/or when you have already given the scenario a go

The next section includes:

- the mark scheme;
- points to consider;
- example discussion points; and
- tips for doing well.



# MARK SCHEME

	<b>Ability to prioritise:</b> recognises which tasks require urgent attention and which tasks can be dealt with at a later point
	<b>Time management:</b> uses time efficiently to read and understand the information while completing all the tasks
	<b>Organisational ability:</b> makes effective use of any materials provided during the exercise and identifies and states the aims of the task, responding appropriately
	<b>Organisational ability:</b> sets out the structure of the answer and/or signposts the relevant points clearly
	<b>Organisational ability:</b> uses bullet points and/or headings where appropriate
	<b>Problem solving:</b> thinks strategically and takes a logical view, offering practical solutions to the matters
	<b>Problem solving:</b> is able to identify important information from the text provided
	<b>Written communication:</b> writes clearly and delivers the information confidently without using overly sophisticated language
	<b>Written communication:</b> adapts writing style to reflect the task and person receiving the correspondence
	<b>Attention to detail:</b> uses the correct salutations, right tones and addresses responses to the correct recipients
	<b>Attention to detail:</b> no spelling or grammatical errors





## POINTS TO CONSIDER

Is this a personal work matter (i.e. training and software updates) or client matters?

Do any other teams/departments need to be notified or updated on the matter?

Is your communication clear and concise?

What are the implications if the matter is not dealt with in the specified timeframe? Does this impact its priority?

Do you have the capacity to complete all the urgent matters?  
If not, have you communicated this to your supervisor?

How will you ensure to divide your time between the tasks?

Identify how your role impacts the deal or matter on a wider scale.

Have you proofread all written tasks to ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors?

Have you read and fully understood the contents of each task and each in-tray item?



# EXAMPLE DISCUSSION POINTS

## Prioritisation task

You are asked to prioritise in-tray items 1-10.

### Approach

- Read through items 1-10 and make brief notes on the person who sent it to you and their title (eg. Sam Smith, senior associate), the deadline if provided and whether they specify the urgency of the matter.
- Assess your notes and group together the items with a deadline for the end of the working day. Another way to categorise the tasks is to divide them based on whether it is a matter related to your personal work, such as the software update and training, or client matters.

**Tip:** in a law firm environment, many matters will be classed as urgent due to the nature of the work. It is important to be able to determine which matters are truly time sensitive and may need completing within the hour, and which matters can wait until later in the day.

- Once you have an order of your urgent tasks that must be completed on the day the other tasks can be ranked based on any system that works for you. For example, if an email only needs a confirmation reply, this won't take too long and could be tied up at the end of the day. The lower priority items must also be able to roll onto the next day in case the other tasks take up more time than you initially expected.

**Tip:** in the real world, unexpected things come up and your plan to fulfil tasks might be overtaken by a matter that needs to be dealt with immediately. Therefore, it is imperative to maintain a somewhat flexible schedule. This task is assessing your ability to prioritise, however, interviewers can also ask this type of question verbally and it is important to demonstrate awareness of the nature of the work and demand for a flexible schedule.

Continue onto next page



# EXAMPLE DISCUSSION POINTS

## Written task

You are asked to respond to each item provided in the document.

### Understanding the task

- This task is listed after the prioritisation task. Don't be tempted to write the emails first as the prioritisation task will help you understand the basis of each in-tray item before writing a response to them.
- Your assessor will be looking for several things (refer back to the mark scheme), however having a clear structure with no spelling or grammatical errors will take you a long way.

**Tip:** responding to and liaising with colleagues, clients and other professionals will be part of your daily work. It is a simple and basic skill to nail and an easy way to demonstrate you are a trustworthy pair of hands.

### How to reply to the items

- There is no correct way to respond to the items, however you should ensure to adapt your tone to suit the task in question. For example, the way you communicate with a client will be different to the way you speak to your supervisor.
- Think about formalities, niceties and professional tone. Take note of the mode of communication (i.e. whether it is an email, text, voicemail or letter).
- Feel free to make some parts up, if it assists with the flow of the response and/or is relevant to your response. This can include names of your colleagues and dates etc.

### Structure:

- Written tasks can take the form of memos, texts or emails (etc). Each task will require a different structure. An email is more formal than a text and you should, therefore, use "Dear [insert]" and signed off with "Kind regards", as a minimum.



# EXAMPLE DISCUSSION POINTS

## Written task

- A text is more informal, however, it is important to maintain professionalism, even when using WhatsApp to communicate.

**Tip:** don't be afraid to use bullet points. They often make your point more concise and might be favoured by a client who wants to read your response quickly.

**Tip:** if writing to a fee earner or client, provide an executive summary at the top of the task to help the reader understand the content of the email, where appropriate. If the email or letter is long, consider using numbered paragraphs and possibly a short summarised conclusion. This will help you to show the assessor that you have understood the task, as well as, scoring marks for being helpful and structured.

## Tone:

- The tone of the written tasks should differ depending on who you are communicating with.
- If in doubt, always use a more formal tone than an informal or chatty tone.

## Timing

- Ensure you keep a very close eye on the time you have to complete the whole exercise.
- Time management is crucial and if you run out of time then the task will have not been completed properly.

**Tip:** you should spend roughly 20 minutes reading the instructions and content of the exercise, 20 minutes working out the order of priority, 35 minutes answering the emails and completing the written part of the task and then 15 minutes double checking and proofing your work.

End of discussion points



# CATEGORIES OF PRIORITY

## URGENT PRIORITY – IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

**In-tray item 1** – urgent request to review and update client file

**In-tray item 10** – file a bundle of documents

**In-tray item 3** – assistance needed for witness statements

## HIGH PRIORITY – ATTENTION BY THE END OF THE DAY

**In-tray item 8** – review draft contract

**In-tray item 4** -request for an update on the progress of the case

**In-tray item 2** – reply to letter regarding property boundaries

**In-tray item 7** – request of attendance at settlement conference

## LOW PRIORITY – ATTENTION BY THE END OF THE WEEK

**In-tray item 9** - update software

**In-tray item 6** - potential new client request

**In-tray item 5** - mandatory training session



# EXAMPLE WRITTEN RESPONSES

1	<p><b>In-tray item 1: Email from a senior partner requesting that you review and update a client file by the end of the day.</b></p> <p>Dear Jane</p> <p>Thank you for your email.</p> <p>All understood. I will start working on your request and update Katy Perry’s client file by 1pm today.</p> <p>In the meantime, please do let me know if there is anything else I can assist you with.</p> <p>Kind regards</p> <p>[YOUR NAME] Trainee Solicitor</p>
7	<p><b>In-tray item 7: Email from the opposing counsel requesting that you attend a settlement conference in three days' time.</b></p> <p>Dear Mr Marks</p> <p>I write further to your email dated [insert date]. Thank you for confirming the date and time upon which the settlement for matter BR-2023-0012 will take place.</p> <p>The attendees will be, as follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [insert name], Senior Partner; and</li> <li>• [your name], Trainee.</li> </ul> <p>We should be grateful if you would confirm who will be attending from your side.</p> <p>Kind regards</p> <p>[YOUR NAME] Trainee Solicitor</p>



# COMMENTARY

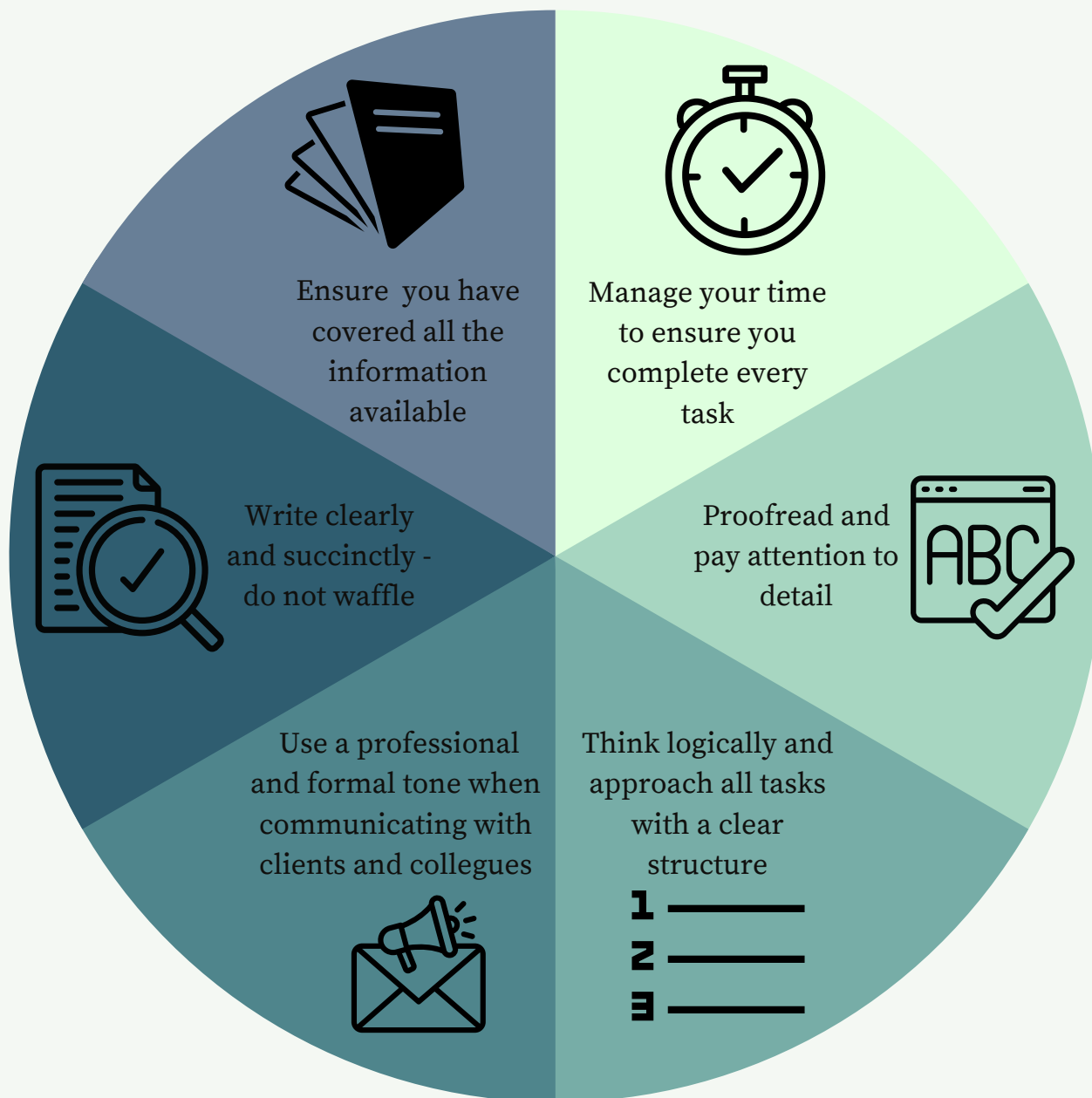
It is important to note that there are many ways to approach this type of task. There is certainly no right or wrong answer to the order priority or how you reply to the matters. As you may have identified, it is crucial to approach the task in a logical way considering the urgency and deadline of each item, while demonstrating excellent written communication skills.

It is hopefully clear that you will require no prior legal knowledge to tackle this task. It is really testing how you prioritise information, digest it in a time restricted setting and whether you can write in a clear and professional manner.

While specific facts are important to understand each in-tray item, try not to get too involved with the details. We just want to see what you can do with the information provided.



# TIPS FOR DOING WELL



For further tips and support head over to our Instagram account  
@itsallhearsay and see posts:

"Assessment Centre Series: Written Exercises"





# GET IN TOUCH

**BLOG:**

[ITSALLHEARSAYBLOG.WORDPRESS.COM](https://www.itsallhearsayblog.wordpress.com)

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