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**Regulations:                      Legal  
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Practice Directions and Rules**

CIRCULAR 10-527 (SD)

6 September 2010

**LEGAL PRACTITIONERS  
(RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION) RULES CAP.159Z**

**RME Obligations of Registered Foreign Lawyers  
who have been admitted as Hong Kong Solicitors**

1. The Legal Practitioners (Risk Management Education) Rules Cap. 159Z (“RME Rules”) came into operation on 1 November 2004 and apply to trainees and solicitors practising in Hong Kong (“HK”) law firms in stages. For non-principals, the RME Rules became applicable to those who were admitted as HK solicitors before 1 January 2001 with effect from 1 November 2006, and those admitted as HK solicitors on or after 1 January 2001 with effect from 1 November 2007.
2. For registered foreign lawyers practising as such in HK law firms, the RME Rules became applicable to them with effect from 1 November 2009.
3. Under rules 5 and 7 of the RME Rules, and subject to rule 8 of the RME Rules, both solicitors and the registered foreign lawyers in HK firms are required to complete a core programme before the end of the practice year in which the RME Rules first apply to them and thereafter, to attend at least 3 hours of electives within each subsequent practice year or failing which, at least 6 hours of electives within the first and second succeeding practice years.
4. Since the RME Rules became applicable to registered foreign lawyers working in HK firms on 1 November 2009, some of them have successfully taken the Overseas Lawyers Qualification Examination and are admitted as HK solicitors. For registered foreign lawyers who fall into this category, the Council has, pursuant to rule 8A(2)(b) of the RME Rules, resolved to grant the following exemption from complying with the RME requirements:
  - (i) Registered foreign lawyers who have already taken the general core courses for registered foreign lawyers under rule 5 of the RME Rules are not required to attend the general core courses for non-principal HK solicitors after their admission as HK solicitors;

- (ii) Registered foreign lawyers who have not taken the general core courses for registered foreign lawyers under rule 5 of the RME Rules are exempted from taking the courses and are permitted to take the general core courses for non-principal HK solicitors after their admission as HK solicitors.
5. For the avoidance of doubt, the exemption in paragraph 4 is granted on condition that a registered foreign lawyer, who is required to complete the core programme for registered foreign lawyers in a practice year but has been admitted as a HK solicitor, takes either the core programme for registered foreign lawyers or the core programme for non-principal HK solicitors within the practice year.

By way of illustration,

- a) If a registered foreign lawyer has practiced as such in a HK law firm for more than 100 days in the 2009/2010 RME practice year, under rule 5 and rule 8 of the RME Rules, he must complete the core programme for registered foreign lawyers by 31 October 2010.
  - b) His obligation to complete the core programme for registered foreign lawyers by 31 October 2010 is exempted under paragraph 4 of this Circular on condition that he completes the core programme for non-principal HK solicitors by 31 October 2010 instead, even though he may not have been in practice as a HK solicitor for more than 100 days by then. This condition applies irrespective of whether the registered foreign lawyer has practiced as a Hong Kong solicitor for more than 100 days or not since his admission within the practice year.
  - c) Alternatively, if the registered foreign lawyer chooses not to attend the core programme for non-principal HK solicitors, he must complete the core programme for registered foreign lawyers by 31 October 2010 as the exemption in paragraph 4 of this Circular will not be applicable to him.
6. It is unnecessary for registered foreign lawyers who fall into the category in paragraph 4 to make an individual application to the Law Society for exemption but they should make a declaration in their statement of compliance when they apply for the renewal of their practising certificates for the purpose of audit.
7. All enquiries should be directed to the Assistant Director, Professional Development at telephone no. 28456 0521 or [adpd@hklawsoc.org.hk](mailto:adpd@hklawsoc.org.hk).
8. This Circular supersedes Circular 10-509(SD).