

**RESPONSE TO STATEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 12 (2) OF THE SOLICITORS  
(DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS RULES) 2019**

I am Joe Morgan, the Respondent in this matter.

This is my Response to the STATEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 12 (2) OF THE SOLICITORS  
(DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS RULES) 2019.

1.1. Denied. My reasons are set out below.

1.2. Denied. My reasons are set out below.

1.3. Denied. My reasons are set out below.

2. N/A

3. N/A

4. N/A

5. N/A

6. Admitted.

7. Admitted.

8. Admitted.

9. Admitted.

10. Admitted.

11. Admitted.

12. Admitted.

13. Admitted.

14. Put to Proof. The Regulatory Interview happened a considerable length of time ago and it was very in depth and stressful. I cannot recall the exact words that I used at that time. However, I did indicate to the SRA that I had worked as quickly as possible to remove the Notary and Apostille services from the website as soon as I discovered that I was not legally entitled to offer these services. I explained to the SRA that it extremely difficult to remove coding / programming from a website and so it may have taken me a little time to remove those aspects. However, I did in any event remove them as fast as possible and completely ceased offering any type of Notary or Apostille service. I thereafter have always refused to carry out any type of Notary work. I always advise clients that documents can only be Notarised by a notary. I always advise client that an Apostille can only be added by the FCO. I have provided numerous pieces of evidence showing that this is the case.

15.1 Admitted.

15.2. Admitted.

15.3. Put to Proof. I agreed this in regard to the offering of Notary and Apostille services. On seeing the legislative rules and regulations, I fully accepted that I am not entitled to offer those services and I completely ceased from offering those services. However, the implication seems to be that I am not able to certify documents as a true copy of the original by remote means. This aspect is denied, and I set out my reasons below.

16. Admitted.

17. Admitted.

18. Admitted.

19. Denied. The statement “the certification service involved him certifying documents as being a true copy of the originals as seen by him, by placing reliance on having seen scans of the documents submitted through this Website” is not an accurate description of the process that I use. The process is far more thorough and diligent than that description would imply. In actuality, the document is uploaded directly to me, and a multitude of thorough checks are carried out. In addition, even if the document were merely a scan, this would still in any event follow all available rules and regulations on certifying documents. I have set out an extensive list of authorities confirming this. The most pertinent of these authorities in the Law Society’s

Guidance on certifying documents. In the example given in the Law Society Guidance, the solicitor certifies a document that had been scanned by a different entity and then sent to a further different entity. This was deemed appropriate.

20. Denied. The Certified Copies are explicit about their intention and origin. All Certified Copies contain:

- DocumentCertifier logo at the top
- DocumentCertifier web address at the top ([www.documentcertifier.com](http://www.documentcertifier.com))
- DocumentCertifier email at the top ([admin@documentcertifier.com](mailto:admin@documentcertifier.com))
- Explicit statement that the Certified Copy was electronically checked and signed by me.
- QR code linking to the free Verify service on the website ([www.documentcertifier.com/verify](http://www.documentcertifier.com/verify)) and uniquely linked to the specific reference number of that document.
- A unique web address link to where the Certified Copy can be verified for free by the end user (e.g. <https://www.documentcertifier.com/verify?ref=U4JDMENDJF>)

To ensure absolute transparency, I also added the following explicit text on all Certified Copies: "Original Document was uploaded, verified and certified electronically".

Therefore, there is no chance that an end user could misconstrue that the Certified Copy was certified electronically.

The website clearly sets out the method used, the surrounding law and policies. The website provides clear examples of the Certified Copies.

Any user can always the end user can always get in contact to confirm whether this method of certifying documents is appropriate for their own specific policies.

Any user is free to clarify with any end user about their own specific requirements / policies.

Any user can contact me via email, via the contact form or via live chat to check anything.

Any end user can contact me via email, via the contact form or via live chat to check anything

It is therefore denied that "the only reasonable inference drawn by others in the circumstances would be that he had seen the original document in its physical paper form and that the copy was an accurate representation of the original physical paper document". The measures above clearly show the intention and origin of the Certified Copies.

21. N/A.

22. N/A.

23. N/A.

24. Admitted.

25. N/A.

26. It is admitted that the original document remains in the possession of the client. It is admitted that I do not have physical possession of the document being certified. However, it is denied that I am simply certifying a 'scan'. This is not an accurate description of the process that I use. As stated above, the process is far more thorough and diligent than this description would imply. In actuality, the document is uploaded directly to me, and a multitude of thorough checks are carried out. In addition, even if the document were merely a scan, this would still in any event follow all available rules and regulations on certifying documents. I have set out an extensive list of authorities confirming this. The most pertinent of these authorities in the Law Society's Guidance on certifying documents. In the example given in the Law Society Guidance, the solicitor certifies a document that had been scanned by a different entity and then sent to a further different entity. This was deemed appropriate.

Furthermore, I have contacted the Law Society directly in order to clarify their guidance. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed to me that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify. Indeed, in their own example within the Law Society Guidance, the solicitor who certifies the document does not have 'physical possession' of the document. This position is backed up by all other available resources, which I set out below. I have also reached out the several other solicitors and legal professionals for their views, and they also agree that all available resources show that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it as a true copy of the original.

27. Denied. In addition to the points on this matter set out already above, this statement inaccurately describes that process. In actuality, the process is as follows:

1. The client provides to me:
  - 1.1. Their name.
  - 1.2. Their address.
  - 1.3. Their email.
  - 1.4. Their date of birth.
  - 1.5. Details of the document to be certified.
  - 1.6. Any other relevant necessary information.
2. The client uploads the original document to certify (e.g. a bank statement, etc) directly to me.

3. The client uploads a form of ID to verify their identity/address.
4. Once all of the above is submitted, I firstly use a Google Document AI software to check the veracity of the uploaded documents. This checks that the document is original, untampered with, is not a sample, does not contain any suspicious words, does not appear anywhere on the internet, etc.
5. I then manually review all of the provided details, the document to certify, and the ID to verify identity/address, and ensure that everything is in order and correct.
6. If there are any issues, I ask the client further clarifying questions, and/or ask them to submit an alternative copy of the document to certify, and/or an alternative copy of the ID to verify their identity/address.
7. Once I am entirely satisfied that everything is in order and correct, I then certify the document to be a true copy of the original document (using the usual language – “I hereby certify that this is a true copy of the original document as seen by me”, etc...).
8. I then send the completed certified copy of the original document back to the client. I initially send this back to the client by email, but also offer the option to print and send a physical copy by post if required.

I have therefore ‘seen’ the original document. I have also seen corresponding ID verification that substantiates the document to be certified. Again, the Law Society have confirmed that there is no need to have ‘physical possession’ of the document being certified.

The produced Certified Copy is indeed therefore a true copy of the original document which I have seen. That is a correct statement given the processes.

Given these points, and the points set out at point 20 above, It is therefore denied that “both customers of the Respondent and recipients relying on the certified copy would place reliance on the solicitor’s certification that it is a true copy of the original physical document which the solicitor had seen.”. The measures above clearly show the intention and origin of the Certified Copies.

28. Admitted, based on the points set out above.

29. Denied. I do not simply rely solely upon the Law Society Guidance as a justification for my business model. Rather, the Law Society Guidance is perhaps the best available resource for showing the current position on certifying documents. I have carried out extensive research into this topic and have gathered what I believe is a comprehensive list of the available literature on the topic. These are set out in much more detail below and in the supporting documents. All of these pieces of literature reiterate the position that documents can indeed be certified remotely.

The document is indeed an exact reproduction of the original, as the original document is uploaded directly to me.

It is denied that “anyone receiving a copy document certified by the Respondent, would infer from the words “*as seen by me*” that he had seen a physical hard copy of the original document. The reasons for this were set out above at points 20 and 27.

It is denied that “the certification as produced by the Respondent does not comply with the Law Society Q&A and is untrue on the proper interpretation of the words of the certification irrespective of any guidance”. I have already set out above the numerous reasons why the Certified Copies comply with the Law Society Guidance. However, in addition to that, I have also reached out directly to the Law Society to clarify their guidance and to confirm that I am complying with all relevant rules and regulations. As previously stated, I have set out my business model transparently to the Law Society. They have explicitly confirmed that the business model is in line with the Law Society Guidance and all available rules and regulations. Furthermore, the Law Society have confirmed that the SRA’s interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed that there is no need to have ‘physical possession’ of a document in order to certify it. Furthermore, the Law Society have advised me to challenge the SRA on what authority they rely on to assert the a solicitor needs to have ‘physical possession’ of a document in order to certify it. Finally, I have also reached out to other solicitors and legal professionals for their opinion on the matter and they similarly agree that the SRA’s interpretation of the rules and regulations on certifying documents is incorrect. Please see this correspondence in more detail below and in the supporting documents.

30. Denied. As set out above, my business model is extremely thorough and diligent.

The Document to be Certified is uploaded to the system. I then also require that the document owner uploads a copy of corresponding ID that allows to definitively Verify that the information

is correct. Depending on the circumstance, this could be a Utility Bill / Bank Statement / Etc, that confirms the document owners correct address.

Essentially, two separate documents are cross-referenced to ensure that they are both corresponding and correct. This is more stringent than what is typically required.

The Document is reviewed thoroughly by me. I inspect each document extremely thoroughly. I check to make sure that the document is true to the very best of my ability.

I check appropriate public records where available and appropriate. For example, anyone can check a service such as Companies House to ensure that details of a company / director / secretary are correct.

Furthermore, My website is programmed so that, if I believe there is an issue with either the document to be Certified, or the corresponding ID used to verify that person's identity, I can quickly send them an email explaining what the issue is and asking them to resolve that issue before I can certify any documents.

The following options are available:

“\_

The Document to be Certified cannot be opened

The Document to be Certified is corrupted

The quality of the Document to be Certified is too low

The incorrect Document to be Certified has been uploaded

The Document to be Certified has been flagged as potentially not genuine by the Solicitor

The Document to be Certified has been flagged as potentially not genuine by A.I.

-

The ID for verification cannot be opened

The ID for verification is corrupted

The quality of the ID for verification is too low

The incorrect ID for verification has been uploaded

The ID for verification has been flagged as potentially not genuine by the Solicitor

The ID for verification has been flagged as potentially not genuine by A.I.”

Once one of those options are selected, an email is sent to the user explaining this.

The user then has an opportunity to upload a new document / ID that resolves the issue. This continues until I can be certain of the veracity of the documents.

I will only ever certify a document once I am absolutely sure that it is genuine and when I have verified this by cross-referencing this against a second form of appropriate ID.

In addition, the website employs Google's Document AI to thoroughly check documents. Information about Google Document AI can be seen here > <https://cloud.google.com/document-ai>

Google's Document AI checks every document and determines the following:

- Are There Online Duplicates?
- Are There Suspicious Words?
- Is Document Manipulated?
- Is It An Identity Document?
- s There A Website Hosting The Document?
- Is There An Online Link To Document?
- What Are The Suspicious Words?

Google's Document AI is used by the biggest companies in the world to check documents and determine whether they are real or fake.

It is a fact that AI is considered more effective at reviewing documents and determining if they are real or fake than any human.

Google Document AI checks documents against data from millions of sources on the internet.

Google Document AI checks to see if anything has been edited, if there are different metadata, if there are different forms of light, if there are inconsistencies in image quality, etc. This is an additional analytical tool that I can use which goes far beyond what any human could do alone.

By using Google Document AI, in conjunction with my own manual thorough review of documents, I can therefore ensure the most painstaking review of documents to ensure their veracity.

This is far beyond the checks that a Solicitor would typically do when glossing over a document.

My document analysis is therefore more thorough than the traditional method and are in fact far safer and more likely to identify whether a document is genuine or not.



Given these points, it is denied that I have undermined any public trust or breached Principle 2 of the SRA Principles. Rather, I have shown that my business model is extremely diligent and thorough and in fact would strengthen public trust.

31. N/A

32. Put to Proof. I agreed this regarding the offering of Notary and Apostille services. On seeing the legislative rules and regulations, I fully accepted that I am not entitled to offer those services and I completely ceased from offering those services. However, the implication seems to be that I am not able to certify documents as a true copy of the original by remote means. This aspect is denied, and I set out my reasons above and below and in the supporting documents.

The Regulatory Interview focused upon me offering Notary and Apostille services and how I was not entitled to do this. I fully accepted this and ceased to offer Notary and Apostille services. There was no mention at all that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. I then entered into the RSA. I received a brief email from the SRA shortly after requesting further details about how I certify documents. I then heard nothing further from the SRA nearly an entire year. It was only at that point that the SRA stated that they were continuing to investigate me for breaching the RSA. I therefore clarified with the Law Society and other legal professionals that my business model does indeed fall in line with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents and with the Law Society's own guidance on certifying documents.

Again, I have indeed seen the original document, as the original document is uploaded directly to me.

Again, the Law Society and all other available literature confirms that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document to certify it.

33. It is admitted that I offer a certification service. However, as set out above, the business model complies with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents. The Law Society have confirmed that the business model follows the Law Society Guidance. The Law Society confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. The Law Society have told me to challenge the SRA on what authority they rely on to make that assertion. I have reached out to several other solicitors and legal professionals and they have confirmed that my interpretation of the Law Society Guidance and all other available rules and regulations on certifying documents is correct, and that the SRA's interpretation is incorrect.

34. Put to Proof. As set out in the points above and in the further literature provided below and in the supporting documents, my business model meets all rules and regulations on certifying documents. I accepted that I am not legally entitled to offer Notary or Apostille services and so I ceased offering these services and agreed to the RSA. However, as mentioned, there was no mention before, during or after the Regulatory Interview that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. The whole process focused on the incorrect providing of Notary and Apostille services. I therefore entered the RSA and agreed never to provide Notary and Apostille services. However, all available literature, the Law Society Guidance, correspondence with the Law Society, and correspondence with other solicitors and legal professionals confirms that I am entitled to certify documents remotely. The SRA would therefore be seeking to prevent me from carrying out a service that I am entitled to and which follows all available rules and regulations without any legal basis to do so. I fully understand that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services and I never would again. However, I do not see that the RSA applies to a business model that the Law Society itself has confirmed meets all available rules and regulations.

35. Denied. I am always absolutely clear with all clients that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services. I am always completely honest and transparent about the RSA and I have never lied or misled anyone in any way about this. I have provided many examples of this below and in the supporting documents.

36. Denied. As set out above, my certification service complies with all available rules and regulations. I see all documents, as the original documents are uploaded directly to me. The Law Society has confirmed that my business model complies with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents and that it complies with the Law Society Guidance. The Law Society have confirmed that documents can be certified remotely and the Law Society have confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. All other available literature confirms this position. Please see further details below and in the supporting documents.

37. Denied. Given the points raised above and below, I have always acted with absolute honesty, clarity and transparency with all clients, with the SRA, with the Law Society and all other parties at all times. This is borne out in previous correspondence. I have always responded to every question and provided all information required of me in an open and timely manner. I have openly described my business practice to the Law Society and they have

confirmed that it complies with their Guidance and with all available literature. The Law Society and other legal professionals that I have reached out to have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

38.1. Admitted.

38.2. Denied. The method is extremely thorough. As set out above, the process is as follows:

1. The client provides to me:
  - 1.1. Their name.
  - 1.2. Their address.
  - 1.3. Their email.
  - 1.4. Their date of birth.
  - 1.5. Details of the document to be certified.
  - 1.6. Any other relevant necessary information.
2. The client uploads the original document to certify (e.g. a bank statement, etc) directly to me.
3. The client uploads a form of ID to verify their identity/address.
4. Once all of the above is submitted, I firstly use a Google Document AI software to check the veracity of the uploaded documents. This checks that the document is original, untampered with, is not a sample, does not contain any suspicious words, does not appear anywhere on the internet, etc.
5. I then manually review all of the provided details, the document to certify, and the ID to verify identity/address, and ensure that everything is in order and correct.
6. If there are any issues, I ask the client further clarifying questions, and/or ask them to submit an alternative copy of the document to certify, and/or an alternative copy of the ID to verify their identity/address.
7. Once I am entirely satisfied that everything is in order and correct, I then certify the document to be a true copy of the original document (using the usual language – “I hereby certify that this is a true copy of the original document as seen by me”, etc...).

8. I then send the completed certified copy of the original document back to the client. I initially send this back to the client by email, but also offer the option to print and send a physical copy by post if required.

I have therefore 'seen' the original document. I have also seen corresponding ID verification that substantiates the document to be certified. Again, the Law Society have confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of the document being certified.

The produced Certified Copy is indeed therefore a true copy of the original document which I have seen. That is a correct statement given the processes.

Furthermore, The Certified Copies are explicit about their intention and origin. All Certified Copies contain:

- DocumentCertifier logo at the top
- DocumentCertifier web address at the top ([www.documentcertifier.com](http://www.documentcertifier.com))
- DocumentCertifier email at the top ([admin@documentcertifier.com](mailto:admin@documentcertifier.com))
- Explicit statement that the Certified Copy was electronically checked and signed by me.
- QR code linking to the free Verify service on the website ([www.documentcertifier.com/verify](http://www.documentcertifier.com/verify)) and uniquely linked to the specific reference number of that document.
- A unique web address link to where the Certified Copy can be verified for free by the end user (e.g. <https://www.documentcertifier.com/verify?ref=U4JDMENDJF>)

To ensure absolute transparency, I also added the following explicit text on all Certified Copies: "Original Document was uploaded, verified and certified electronically".

Therefore, there is no chance that an end user could misconstrue that the Certified Copy was certified electronically.

The website clearly sets out the method used, the surrounding law and policies. The website provides clear examples of the Certified Copies.

Any user can always the end user can always get in contact to confirm whether this method of certifying documents is appropriate for their own specific policies.

Any user is free to clarify with any end user about their own specific requirements / policies.

Any user can contact me via email, via the contact form or via live chat to check anything.

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It is therefore denied that "the only reasonable inference drawn by others in the circumstances would be that he had seen the original document in its physical paper form and that the copy was an accurate representation of the original physical paper document". The measures above clearly show the intention and origin of the Certified Copies.

38.3. Put to Proof. As set out in the points above and in the further literature provided below and in the supporting documents, my business model meets all rules and regulations on certifying documents. I accepted that I am not legally entitled to offer Notary or Apostille services and so I ceased offering these services and agreed to the RSA. However, as mentioned, there was no mention before, during or after the Regulatory Interview that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. The whole process focused on the incorrect providing of Notary and Apostille services. I therefore entered the RSA and agreed never to provide Notary and Apostille services. However, all available literature, the Law Society Guidance, correspondence with the Law Society, and correspondence with other solicitors and legal professionals confirms that I am entitled to certify documents remotely. The SRA would therefore be seeking to prevent me from carrying out a service that I am entitled to and which follows all available rules and regulations without any legal basis to do so. I fully understand that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services and I never would again. However, I do not see that the RSA applies to a business model that the Law Society itself has confirmed meets all available rules and regulations.

38.4. Denied. I do not simply rely solely upon the Law Society Guidance as a justification for my business model. Rather, the Law Society Guidance is perhaps the best available resource for showing the current position on certifying documents. I have carried out extensive research into this topic and have gathered what I believe is a comprehensive list of the available literature on the topic. These are set out in much more detail below and in the supporting documents. All of these pieces of literature reiterate the position that documents can indeed be certified remotely.

Furthermore, as stated, I have contacted the Law Society directly in order to clarify their guidance. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed to me that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify. Indeed, in their own example within the Law Society Guidance, the solicitor who certifies the document does not have 'physical possession' of the document. This position is backed up by all other available resources, which I set out below and in the supporting documents. I have also reached out to several other solicitors and legal professionals for their views, and they also agree that all available resources show that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it as a true copy of the original.

As previously stated, I have set out my business model transparently to the Law Society. They have explicitly confirmed that the business model is in line with the Law Society Guidance and all available rules and regulations. Furthermore, the Law Society have confirmed that the

SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Furthermore, the Law Society have advised me to challenge the SRA on what authority they rely on to assert the a solicitor needs to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Finally, I have also reached out to other solicitors and legal professionals for their opinion on the matter and they similarly agree that the SRA's interpretation of the rules and regulations on certifying documents is incorrect. Please see this correspondence in more detail below and in the supporting documents.

38.5. Denied. I have always been entirely open, honest and transparent with the SRA throughout the entire process. I have always answered every question and provided every piece of information that they have requested in a timely manner. The Regulatory Interview focused upon me offering Notary and Apostille services and how I was not entitled to do this. I fully accepted this and ceased to offer Notary and Apostille services. There was no mention at all that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. I then entered into the RSA. I received a brief email from the SRA shortly after requesting further details about how I certify documents. I then heard nothing further from the SRA nearly an entire year. It was only at that point that the SRA stated that they were continuing to investigate me for breaching the RSA. I therefore clarified with the Law Society and other legal professionals that my business model does indeed fall in line with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents and with the Law Society's own guidance on certifying documents.

39. Denied. As stated above, I have always acted with absolute honesty, clarity and transparency with all clients, with the SRA, with the Law Society and all other parties at all times. This is borne out in previous correspondence. I have always responded to every question and provided all information required of me in an open and timely manner. I have openly described my business practice to the Law Society and they have confirmed that it complies with their Guidance and with all available literature. The Law Society and other legal professionals that I have reached out to have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

40. Denied. As stated above, I am always absolutely clear with all clients that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services. I am always completely honest and transparent about the RSA and I have never lied or misled anyone in any way about this. I have provided many examples of this below and in the supporting documents.

41. Denied. As stated, I have set out my business model transparently to the Law Society. They have explicitly confirmed that the business model is in line with the Law Society Guidance and all available rules and regulations. Furthermore, the Law Society have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Furthermore, the Law Society have advised me to challenge the SRA on what authority they rely on to assert the a solicitor needs to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Finally, I have also reached out to other solicitors and legal professionals for their opinion on the matter and they similarly agree that the SRA's interpretation of the rules and regulations on certifying documents is incorrect. Please see this correspondence in more detail below and in the supporting docuemnts.

42. Denied. I have set out my business model transparently to the Law Society. They have explicitly confirmed that the business model is in line with the Law Society Guidance and all available rules and regulations. Furthermore, the Law Society have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect. The Law Society have explicitly confirmed that there is no need to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Furthermore, the Law Society have advised me to challenge the SRA on what authority they rely on to assert the a solicitor needs to have 'physical possession' of a document in order to certify it. Finally, I have also reached out to other solicitors and legal professionals for their opinion on the matter and they similarly agree that the SRA's interpretation of the rules and regulations on certifying documents is incorrect. Please see this correspondence in more detail below and in the supporting documents.

Furthermore, as stated above, I am always absolutely clear with all clients that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services. I am always completely honest and transparent about the RSA and I have never lied or misled anyone in any way about this. I have provided many examples of this below and in the supporting documents.

43. Denied. As stated above, I have always acted with absolute honesty, clarity and transparency with all clients, with the SRA, with the Law Society and all other parties at all times. This is borne out in previous correspondence. I have always responded to every question and provided all information required of me in an open and timely manner. I have openly described my business practice to the Law Society and they have confirmed that it complies with their Guidance and with all available literature. The Law Society and other legal professionals that I have reached out to have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

In addition, I have sent several emails to the SRA since January 2024 setting out the correspondence that I have had with the Law Society regarding the SRA's incorrect interpretation of the Law Society's Guidance on certifying documents. To date, I have not received any form of response from any of the case handlers at the SRA.

I therefore do not think that is at all correct to imply that I have failed to cooperate with the SRA.

All of this evidenced in all of my previous answered and unanswered correspondence with the SRA.

44. N/A.

45. Admitted.

46. Denied. As stated above, I have always acted with absolute honesty, clarity and transparency with all clients, with the SRA, with the Law Society and all other parties at all times. This is borne out in previous correspondence. I have always responded to every question and provided all information required of me in an open and timely manner. I have openly described my business practice to the Law Society and they have confirmed that it complies with their Guidance and with all available literature. The Law Society and other legal professionals that I have reached out to have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

Furthermore, as previously stated, my process is as follows:

1. The client provides to me:
  - 1.1. Their name.
  - 1.2. Their address.
  - 1.3. Their email.
  - 1.4. Their date of birth.
  - 1.5. Details of the document to be certified.
  - 1.6. Any other relevant necessary information.



2. The client uploads the original document to certify (e.g. a bank statement, etc) directly to me.
3. The client uploads a form of ID to verify their identity/address.
4. Once all of the above is submitted, I firstly use a Google Document AI software to check the veracity of the uploaded documents. This checks that the document is original, untampered with, is not a sample, does not contain any suspicious words, does not appear anywhere on the internet, etc.
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6. If there are any issues, I ask the client further clarifying questions, and/or ask them to submit an alternative copy of the document to certify, and/or an alternative copy of the ID to verify their identity/address.
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I have therefore ‘seen’ the original document. I have also seen corresponding ID verification that substantiates the document to be certified. Again, the Law Society have confirmed that there is no need to have ‘physical possession’ of the document being certified.

The produced Certified Copy is indeed therefore a true copy of the original document which I have seen. That is a correct statement given the processes.

I therefore deny that statement that “(I) certified ... documents in circumstances where (I) (have) not required sight of the original document from the document holders”.

I have seen the original documents, as they are uploaded directly to me and the Law Society have confirmed that this is valid.

Additionally, it is denied that “the certification of those documents is worded such that the Respondent is representing that he has seen the original document when he knew that he had not done so. This has the potential to mislead the recipient of a document certified in that manner”.

As stated in the points above, I have indeed seen the original document.

It is denied that there is a potential to mislead a recipient.

As previously stated, The Certified Copies are explicit about their intention and origin. All Certified Copies contain:

- DocumentCertifier logo at the top
- DocumentCertifier web address at the top ([www.documentcertifier.com](http://www.documentcertifier.com))
- DocumentCertifier email at the top ([admin@documentcertifier.com](mailto:admin@documentcertifier.com))
- Explicit statement that the Certified Copy was electronically checked and signed by me.
- QR code linking to the free Verify service on the website ([www.documentcertifier.com/verify](http://www.documentcertifier.com/verify)) and uniquely linked to the specific reference number of that document.
- A unique web address link to where the Certified Copy can be verified for free by the end user (e.g. <https://www.documentcertifier.com/verify?ref=U4JDMENDJF>)

To ensure absolute transparency, I also added the following explicit text on all Certified Copies: “Original Document was uploaded, verified and certified electronically”.

Therefore, there is no chance that an end user could misconstrue that the Certified Copy was certified electronically.

The website clearly sets out the method used, the surrounding law and policies. The website provides clear examples of the Certified Copies.

Any user can always the end user can always get in contact to confirm whether this method of certifying documents is appropriate for their own specific policies.

Any user is free to clarify with any end user about their own specific requirements / policies.

Any user can contact me via email, via the contact form or via live chat to check anything.

Any end user can contact me via email, via the contact form or via live chat to check anything.

47. Denied. As set out above, I have always acted with absolute honesty, clarity and transparency with all clients, with the SRA, with the Law Society and all other parties at all times. This is borne out in previous correspondence. I have always responded to every question and provided all information required of me in an open and timely manner. I have openly described my business practice to the Law Society and they have confirmed that it

complies with their Guidance and with all available literature. The Law Society and other legal professionals that I have reached out to have confirmed that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

Furthermore, I am always absolutely clear with all clients that I cannot provide Notary or Apostille services. I am always completely honest and transparent about the RSA and I have never lied or misled anyone in any way about this. I have provided many examples of this below and in the supporting documents.

48. Put to Proof. The Regulatory Interview focused upon me offering Notary and Apostille services and how I was not entitled to do this. I fully accepted this and ceased to offer Notary and Apostille services. There was no mention at all that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. I then entered into the RSA. I received a brief email from the SRA shortly after requesting further details about how I certify documents. I then heard nothing further from the SRA nearly an entire year. It was only at that point that the SRA stated that they were continuing to investigate me for breaching the RSA. I therefore clarified with the Law Society and other legal professionals that my business model does indeed fall in line with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents and with the Law Society's own guidance on certifying documents.

In addition, I have sent several emails to the SRA since January 2024 setting out the correspondence that I have had with the Law Society regarding the SRA's incorrect interpretation of the Law Society's Guidance on certifying documents. To date, I have not received any form of response from any of the case handlers at the SRA.

I therefore do not think that is at all correct to imply that I have failed to cooperate with the SRA.

All of this evidenced in all of my previous answered and unanswered correspondence with the SRA.

49.1. Denied. I do not simply rely solely upon the Law Society Guidance as a justification for my business model. Rather, the Law Society Guidance is perhaps the best available resource for showing the current position on certifying documents. I have carried out extensive research into this topic and have gathered what I believe is a comprehensive list of the available literature on the topic. These are set out in much more detail below and in the supporting

documents. All of these pieces of literature reiterate the position that documents can indeed be certified remotely.

I also reached out to several Solicitors and legal professionals and they agree that the SRA's interpretation of the Law Society Guidance is incorrect.

I set out evidence of these additional pieces of literature above and in the supporting documents.

49.2. Denied. The Regulatory Interview focused upon me offering Notary and Apostille services and how I was not entitled to do this. I fully accepted this and ceased to offer Notary and Apostille services. There was no mention at all that my method of certifying documents was being challenged. I then entered into the RSA. I received a brief email from the SRA shortly after requesting further details about how I certify documents. I then heard nothing further from the SRA nearly an entire year. It was only at that point that the SRA stated that they were continuing to investigate me for breaching the RSA. I therefore clarified with the Law Society and other legal professionals that my business model does indeed fall in line with all available rules and regulations on certifying documents and with the Law Society's own guidance on certifying documents.

50.

51. N/A.

Joe Morgan

10 May 2024

**ADDITIONAL POINTS TO THE RESPONSE TO STATEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 12  
(2) OF THE SOLICITORS (DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS RULES) 2019**

52. In my research, I found the other following relevant statutes / guidance on the subject:

LexisNexis has a guidance note from 21 October 2020 called: "Can certified copies of documents be sent/received by email? Is a certified copy of a document sent/received by email a 'true copy'?" ("21/10/20 Note").

The 21/10/20 Note states: "A certified copy is an accurate, complete and current copy (usually a photocopy) of an original document. The certified copy will include a statement that it is a true copy of the original as at the date certified. It does not certify that the original document is genuine, only that it is a true copy of the original".

This shows that Certified Copies can be scanned/photocopied. It also shows that by Certifying a document, the Solicitor is solely stating that it is a true copy of the original document that he has seen. It is not confirming whether the original document is genuine. My process follows this guidance. The 21/10/20 Note also states: "There does not seem to be any authority which confirms whether a certified copy in digital format (required for it to be sent or received via email) would satisfy such statutory requirements". This again shows that there is no prescribed rule to follow when certifying a document. The 21/10/20 Note also states: "As a matter of best practice, when asked to submit a copy document, it is advisable to check with the body requiring a certified copy as to the form of words required and the acceptable format of the certified copy". This shows that different entities may each have their own specific requirements and policies regarding what they specifically require. It would be impossible to know what each particular person / business requires and so I always recommend that people question whether process provided by the website will be suitable for the end-users requirements if there is any doubt. The 21/10/20 Note also states: "in its 2019 report on the Electronic Execution of Documents, the Law Commission surveyed a number of bodies requiring registration of transactional documents to understand their requirements in the context of the electronic execution. At paragraph 2.65 of their report they say: 'Companies House has told us that they operate an online filing service which allows most forms, notices and statements to be both signed and delivered to Companies House electronically. Where a copy of a document needs to be filed at Companies House, for

example a document creating a charge over a company's assets, Companies House require a certified copy of the relevant document to be provided. If the document creating the charge has been executed using only electronic signatures, a PDF copy of that document or deed can be uploaded and the person making the filing can certify that it is a correct copy of the original without the need for a wet ink signature. A copy of the charge certificate is then emailed to the person who registered the charge.”.

This shows that when the Law Commission surveyed several bodies regarding the broader question of certifying electronic document, bodies including Companies House confirmed that this is valid and is a practice they follow and encourage themselves. The Law Commission has not issued any rules regarding this issue following their survey.

LexisNexis also has a guidance note from 28 January 2021 called “Do you have any guidance on the process for certifying a passport by video call?” (“28/01/21 Note”).

The 28/01/21 Note states: “A certified copy is an accurate, complete and current copy (usually a photocopy) of an original document. The certified copy will include a statement that it is a true copy of the original as at the date certified. It does not certify that the original document is genuine, only that it is a true copy of the original”.

Again, this shows that Certified Copies can be scanned/photocopied. It also shows that by Certifying a document, the Solicitor is solely stating that it is a true copy of the original document that he has seen. It is not confirming whether the original document is genuine. My process follows this guidance. The 28/01/21 Note also states: “The UK Government has issued general guidance on certifying a document which can be found here. This does not contain any guidance as to whether it is possible to verify a document by means of video link”. Again, it is clear that there is no prescribed formula for how a document can be Certified. In this example, it is open to certify a document remotely and electronically, in this specific example by video link.

LexisNexis also has a guidance note from 29 March 2022 called “Can a solicitor certify copies of a birth, marriage or death certificate where the document for copying is an official copy of the relevant register?” (“29/03/22 Note”).

The 29/03/22 Note states: “A certified copy is an accurate, complete and current copy (usually a photocopy) of an original document. It does not certify that the original document is genuine, only that it is a true copy of the original”. Again, this shows that Certified Copies can be scanned/photocopied. It also shows that by Certifying a document, the Solicitor is

solely stating that it is a true copy of the original document that he has seen. It is not confirming whether the original document is genuine.

My process follows this guidance. The 29/03/22 Note also states: “The Law Society states that there are no specific rules that apply to the certification of documents, only that the document must be a true copy”. This again clearly reiterates the overall point that there are no clear rules on how documents should be certified as a true copy in the UK. The Law Society guidance clearly states this, and this is backed up by all the supporting available guidance.

LexisNexis also has an undated guidance note called “Certified copy requirements in commercial transactions” (“Undated Note”).

The Undated Note states: “A certified copy is an accurate, complete and current copy (usually a photocopy) of an original document and, as such, is a form of secondary evidence, where it is not practical or possible to produce an original document. The certified copy will include a statement that it is a true copy of the original as at the date certified. It does not certify that the original document is genuine, only that it is a true copy of the original”. Again, this shows that Certified Copies can be scanned/photocopied. It also shows that by Certifying a document, the Solicitor is solely stating that it is a true copy of the original document that he has seen. It is not confirming whether the original document is genuine.

My process follows this guidance. The Undated Note also states: “As a matter of best practice, when asked to submit a copy document, it is advisable to check with the body requiring authorisation whether they require the copy to be certified or not, and if so, what form of certifying words are required”.

The Undated Note also states: “Check with the organisation requiring the certified copy— the person required to certify a document will sometimes be specified under relevant legislation or formal guidelines produced by the body requiring the certified document or they may have specific rules for who can certify a document.”.

The Undated Note also states: “There does not seem to be any authority which confirms whether a certified copy in digital format would satisfy the statutory requirements of the section 1 of the Evidence Act 1845. The body requiring a certified copy may have its own specific requirements as to the acceptable format of the certified copy”.

This again shows that different entities may each have their own specific requirements and policies regarding what they specifically require. It would be impossible to know what each particular person / business requires and so I always recommend that people question whether process provided by the website will be suitable for the end-users requirements if there is any doubt. The Undated Note also states: “There is no legal authority or government guidance as to whether it is possible to verify a document by means of a video link. As a matter

of best practice, when asked to submit a certified copy of a document, it is advisable to check with the body requiring the document whether verification of the original via video link is acceptable". Again, it is clear that there is no prescribed formula for how a document can be Certified. In this example, it is open to certify a document remotely and electronically, in this specific example by video link.

Taking all the available resources, as set out above, it is clear that there are no clear rules on how documents should be certified as a true copy in the UK. The Law Society guidance clearly states this, and this is backed up by all the supporting available guidance.

53. All available guidance from the Law Society and other sources confirm that it is perfectly valid to Certify uploaded documents / photocopies.

Before I created the website, during the creation of the website, up until the present date, I have always tried to keep on top of the available literature and guidance relating to Certifying Documents in the UK. I have thoroughly searched the internet and legal databases like Westlaw, LexisNexis, etc. I have collated what I believe to be a complete list of the available resources.

The available guidance states that there are no prescribed rules on how documents should be Certified.

As stated in previous correspondence, the Law Society sets out its only advice on its website, available at the following link > <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Contact-or-visit-us/Helplines/Practice-advice-service/Q-and-As/How-should-I-certify-a-copy-of-an-original-document>

That article has the following title – "A residuary beneficiary has requested a certified copy will. The original was electronically scanned, then submitted to the probate registry. Can I print the scanned will and certify it as a true copy of the original?"

I think it is very important to note, that it states that the original document was "scanned", and "then", subsequent to that, it was later "then submitted" to the probate registry. It is clear from the writing, that the original document was not sent to the probate registry. Instead, the original was firstly scanned and then, only subsequent to that, was it sent to the probate registry. It then asks, can that scanned copy be subsequently printed out and certified. So in this singular and very specific example discussed by the Law Society, the final certified copy is three times removed from the 'original' document. The original was scanned, then the scanned copy was printed, and then that printed copy was certified.



In response, on the same link, the Law Society specifically and unequivocally state:

“There are no specific rules that apply to the certification of documents in the same way as there are for the swearing of oaths, affirmations and declarations. It’s entirely up to you how you certify. So long as the printed copy is ‘true’ to the original – that is, an exact reproduction of the original – you can certify it as a true copy. In this instance, you may wish to say, for example, “I certify that this is a true copy of the scanned original,” so that it’s clear what it is a true copy of.”

The Law Society have clearly considered the very specific case of a document that has been scanned, then printed, then certified. The Law Society’s clear response is that there are “no specific rules that apply to the certification of documents”. The Law Society further clearly states that “it’s entirely up to you how you certify”. Finally, the Law Society you “may wish to use the following wording...” In total, it is clear that, having considered a document that has been scanned, then printed, then certified, the Law Society say there are no specific rules regarding this practice.

Given the above, I have followed the Law Society’s guidance exactly and I have not breached the guidance in any way.

In this situation, it is even more clear, as users directly upload the original document straight to me. Users are not repeatedly printing, scanning, printing and then certifying.

This position is backed up by all other available sources.

Joe Morgan

10 May 2024