

Q&A

July 2020

For people qualifying via the SQE after autumn 2021

General

Open all [#]

What is the SQE?

The SQE is the Solicitors Qualifying Examination which will be introduced on 1 September 2021, subject to final approval from the Legal Services Board.

In the future, all those wishing to qualify as a solicitor will need to pass the SQE, as well as holding a degree or equivalent qualification or experience, complete a two-year period of qualifying work experience and meet our suitability requirements.

SQE1 primarily tests candidates' functioning legal knowledge, while SQE2 tests practical legal skills.

Do you need a degree to sit SQE1 and/or SQE2?

No. However, to be admitted as a solicitor, you will need a degree (in any subject) or equivalent in addition to passing the SQE. 'Equivalent' means a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree, such as:

- a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship
- a level 6 or 7 professional qualification

If you don't have an equivalent qualification, we may be able to count experience in the workplace as equivalent.

How much will the SQE exam cost?

The estimated cost of the two stages of assessment is between £3,000 - £4,500.

SQE1 will primarily test the application of legal knowledge. The fees range estimate is £1,100 - £1,650. SQE2 will test practical legal skills. The fee range estimate is £1,900 - £2,850.

The costs are based on an estimated 35 hours of assessment, including written tests, computer-based assessments and simulations such as mock client interviews. These costs are indicative, as we continue our work with Kaplan to develop and test the assessments.

How much will the SQE training cost?

If training is included as part of a degree, then there will be no additional charge.

We have a list of training providers [\[sra/policy/sqe/training-provider-list\]](#) you can contact directly for more information about training courses and costs.

When will the SQE exams occur?

The SQE will be introduced from 1 September 2021 and initially there will be two sittings of each exam per year. Please remember you can only take SQE2 after passing SQE1.

The planned dates for 2021 and 2022 are available on our SQE assessment page

Are there sample papers available?

Sample questions for SQE1 can now be accessed (PDF 94 pages, 826KB)

[/globalassets/documents/sra/sqe1-functioning-legal-knowledge-sample-questions.pdf?version=49745e] .

How will the SQE assessment organisation be appointed?

Kaplan have been appointed as the assessment provider for the SQE.

I have heard the way in which solicitors qualify is changing. Does that mean current solicitors are not competent?

We are making changes to make sure the way solicitors qualify in the future is consistent, but that does not mean solicitors who qualified under the old system are not competent.

Currently, solicitors undertake extensive and thorough training before qualifying. When qualified, they must undertake a programme of continuing professional development to make sure that they are competent to perform their job roles and provide a proper standard of service to clients.

What data will the SRA be publishing about the SQE course providers?

We will publish data about the performance of all education and training providers. These will not be league tables.

How can I get involved in the SRA's development of the SQE?

We would be delighted if you joined our LinkedIn group. You can use this group to discuss the developing ideas around the SQE and the new routes to qualification.

Thinking of becoming a solicitor in the future

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Can I still start a Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law and qualify under the old regulations?

Yes, you can. Our transitional arrangements [/students/sqe/transitional-arrangements/] are designed to give candidates who, by 1 September 2021, are already on their way to becoming a solicitor as much choice as possible.

This means someone already studying or training can continue to qualify through the existing routes or choose to do the SQE.

Our transitional arrangements cover anyone who, before 1 September 2021, has completed, started, accepted an offer of a place to start or paid a non-refundable deposit for one of the following:

- a qualifying law degree
- the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law
- the Legal Practice Course
- a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract).

To fall within the transition, in most cases the courses must actually start on or before 31 December 2021. Full details are set out in our transitional arrangements [students/sqe/transitional-arrangements/], including further details of the different arrangements for students who have deferred their place from 2020 to 2021, or who were offered a training contract on or before 31 August 2021.

Are there any time restrictions as to how long a candidate should wait after taking SQE1 to sitting SQE2?

The SQE will be introduced from 1 September 2021 and initially there will be two sittings of each exam per year. The planned dates for 2021 and 2022 are available on our SQE assessment page [students/sqe/sqe-assessments/#heading_01fd].

I am in school, but want to become a solicitor. Do I have to sit the SQE?

The introductory date for the new SQE is 1 September 2021, so if you start your degree or training after then, you'll need to take the SQE.

To qualify as a solicitor under the new regulations you will need to:

- have a degree or equivalent qualification or equivalent experience
- pass the SQE
- done two years' full-time qualifying work experience
- meet our suitability requirements.

The current route to qualification will also remain open until 31 December 2032 for any candidate who, as at 1 September 2021, has completed, started, accepted an offer to start or paid a non-refundable deposit for one of the following:

a qualifying law degree

- the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law
- the Legal Practice Course
- a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract).

I am still in school but want to become a solicitor in the future. Is there a particular kind of work experience that will be needed?

Under the new regulations, you will need qualifying work experience which:

- is experience of providing legal services that gives you the opportunity to develop the prescribed competences for solicitors
- is at least two years' full time or equivalent
- has been done in no more than four organisations
- has been signed off by either the Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP) or a solicitor in the organisation or by another nominated solicitor. This confirmation must be obtained from each organisation.

I am undecided whether to become a solicitor or a barrister. Will there be courses and qualifications like the current law

degree, which will satisfy some of the requirements for both?

A law degree will still provide legal knowledge, but the content of each degree and how closely it is aligned to the content of the SQE assessments may vary. This may also be the case for the Bar Standards Board requirements.

Although you will not need a law degree to qualify as a solicitor, you may wish to check whether your degree provider intend to incorporate SQE preparation as part of the curriculum.

Once the design of the SQE has been finalised, we expect that universities and training providers will signpost whether and how their courses will prepare candidates for the SQE.

Visit the Bar Standards Board website for more on the arrangements for barristers [<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/>].

I have not yet done any legal studies. I am not sure whether to start on an existing route to qualification, or to wait for the new route to qualification. Do you have a summary of current requirements, and of the new route to qualification, so that I can compare them?

Read information on the current routes to qualification. [[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/](#)]

Read information on solicitor apprenticeships [[students/resources/solicitor-apprenticeship-qa/](#)].

Read information on the SQE and in the Resources accessible from that page. [[home/hot-topics/solicitors-qualifying-examination/](#)]

Read information on transitional arrangements. [[students/sqe/transitional-arrangements/](#)]

I am interested in taking the SQE as soon as it is introduced. Will there be preparatory courses? If there are, when will such courses start, and what are they likely to cost?

We have a list of training providers [[sra/policy/sqe/training-provider-list/](#)] you can contact directly for more information about training courses and costs.

I have a criminal record and want become a solicitor. How will the changes affect me?

The change will not affect you, we will check whether you are suitable to become a solicitor when you apply to us for admission after you have passed the SQE and undertaken qualifying work experience. You will be able to get guidance on whether you are likely to pass this process of checking your suitability before you start your training to become a solicitor.

I do not want to do a degree. Will I be able to become a solicitor without one?

To be admitted as a solicitor, you will need a degree (in any subject) or equivalent, in addition to passing the SQE. 'Equivalent' means a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree, such as:

- a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship
- a level 6 or 7 professional qualification

If you don't have an equivalent qualification, we may be able to count experience in the

workplace as equivalent.

Period of Recognised Training (PRT)

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I am partway through my PRT. How will the changes affect me?

If you started a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract) before 1 September 2021, then you can qualify as a solicitor through the [current route](#) [trainees/admission/admission-criteria] .

To qualify this way, by 31 December 2032, you'll also need to:

- pass a qualifying law degree or Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law
- pass the Legal Practice Course [students/lpc]
- complete a PRT [trainees/period-recognised-training]
- meet our character and suitability requirements [trainees/character-and-suitability] .

If you are unable to complete a period of recognised training , you can chose to qualify through the [SQE](#) [students/sqe] .

I have not yet been able to get a PRT (formerly referred to as a training contract). How will the changes affect me?

We will accept experience equivalent of the new qualifying work experience as a PRT, so long as you have successfully completed the SQE2 assessment as well.

If you do secure a PRT, you will have until 31 December 2032 to qualify through the current route.

I have completed a QLD, CPE, GDL, LPC or Exempting Law Degree. If I wait to take the SQE when it is introduced, may I transition into the new route in a way that accredits the qualifications I have already done?

Yes, you can qualify through the SQE. You will need to successfully pass SQE1 and SQE2 and complete a two-year period of qualifying work experience.

If you have completed an LPC, all you have left under the old route is to complete the Period of Recognised Training and the Professional Skills Course. You could choose to do that. Alternatively, under the Equivalent Means route, you could also ask us to recognise the combination of qualifying work experience and successfully passing SQE2 as equivalent to the period of recognised training. Please be aware that the first sitting of SQE2 will be April 2022.

I hold a QLD, CPE, GDL and the LPC, or an Exempting Law Degree. I am now considering paralegal work instead of a training contract. Would paralegal experience count as qualifying work experience under the new regulations?

Yes, qualifying work experience undertaken now could count towards admission under the new regulations, if it meets the following requirements:

- it is experience of providing legal services that gives you the opportunity to develop the

prescribed competences for solicitors.

- it is at least two years' full-time or equivalent.
- it has been done in no more than four organisations.
- it has been signed off by either the Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP), a solicitor in the organisation or by another nominated solicitor. This confirmation must be obtained for each organisation.

Current law students

I am already studying a QLD, CPE, GDL, LPC or an Exempting Law Degree. Do I have to sit the SQE?

No, if you started a qualifying law degree, the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, the Legal Practice Course or an Exempting Law Degree, before 1 September 2021 you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations under our transitional arrangements [\[students/sqe/transitional-arrangements/\]](#) until 31 December 2032. See the circumstances in which we will recognise QLD and CPE courses which start after 1 September 2021.