

News release

SRA publishes suite of resources ahead of SQE introduction

10 December 2020

With less than a year to go until the first sitting of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), we have published further guidance setting out our expectations for qualifying work experience.

Replacing the need for a prescriptive training contract, under the SQE, candidates must gain two years' qualifying work experience of providing legal services. This can be in up to four organisations, must enable the candidate to gain some or all of the relevant [competences](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/) [\[https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/), and be confirmed by a solicitor or compliance officer of legal practice (COLP).

The additional [guidance](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/meeting-standards-good-qualifying-work-experience/) [\[https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/meeting-standards-good-qualifying-work-experience/\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/meeting-standards-good-qualifying-work-experience/) for firms and organisations sets out expectations for good quality qualifying work experience. This includes making sure candidates carry out a diverse and varied range of work, have opportunities to gain exposure to ethical issues, and that they are effectively supervised. There is also [guidance on what we expect when qualifying work experience is confirmed](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/colps-confirming-qualifying-work-experience/) [\[https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/colps-confirming-qualifying-work-experience/\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/colps-confirming-qualifying-work-experience/).

We have also published further [guidance for candidates](https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/best-qualifying-work-experience/) [\[https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/best-qualifying-work-experience/\]](https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/best-qualifying-work-experience/) to help them get the most out of their experience. This includes identifying at the start of any placement who is confirming the work and getting clarity around expectations of the role. It also highlights the need for opportunities for regular reflection and the importance of developing professionalism.

Julie Brannan, SRA Director of Education and Training, said: “The new approach to gaining work experience has huge potential. It will offer firms much more flexibility around training and recruitment, as well as the chance to offer new opportunities for staff. It should also empower candidates. It should get rid of the training contract bottleneck, which leaves too many talented people with large LPC debts but unable to qualify.

“If these opportunities are to be realised it is important everyone understands our expectations and their responsibilities. Conversations between candidates and employers will be crucial - not only to make sure

both are on the same page at the start of a placement, but to assess progress throughout.”

In addition to this guidance, we have also published our [information strategy](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/sqe-information-strategy/) [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/sqe-information-strategy/]. It sets out the approach to publishing information on the SQE, including when key information will be made available, as well as the approach to evaluation.

Ahead of the first SQE1 assessment in November 2021, key dates in 2021 include the launch of the SQE website in spring, which will bring together all the information on the assessment in one place. In the summer we will also provide access to the SQE portal, where candidates will register for their SQE account allowing them to book exams and receive their results. Candidates will be able to apply for admission under SQE from 1 September 2021 when the new SQE regulations come into force.

In addition to publishing [sample questions for SQE2](https://sqe.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe2-sample-questions/) [https://sqe.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe2-sample-questions/] and [the assessment regulations](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/sqe-assessment-regulations/) [https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/sqe-assessment-regulations/], in November, we have shared further information to help people understand how the SQE will operate. We have published the policy on reasonable adjustments with a Q and A, information about the registration and booking process, and what will happen on the day of an SQE1 assessment.

Julie Brannan said: “The SQE is soon to be a reality. This time next year the first candidates will have sat SQE1. Our information strategy, alongside the other resources we are publishing, will help people understand the path to its introduction, the practical details of how to qualify under the new system and the opportunities SQE brings.”