

Questions and answers

September 2021

General

Open all [#]

What is the SQE?

It is a single, rigorous assessment for all aspiring solicitors.

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, completing a two-year period of qualifying work experience and meeting our suitability requirements.

You can find out more about what is tested on the SQE assessment website [<https://sqe.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information>] . You can learn more about qualifying as a solicitor on our SQE route page [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/>]

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 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/degree-equivalent/>] , in addition to passing the SQE and meet our other requirements.

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 work experience as equivalent.

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 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/training-provider-list/>] you can contact directly for more information about training courses and costs.

Now solicitors will qualify through the SQE, does it mean those who qualified through the LPC

route are not competent?

The SQE will make sure of consistent standards. But that does not mean solicitors who qualified under the LPC route are not competent.

Though the LPC route, solicitors undertook extensive and thorough training before qualifying. When qualified, all solicitors 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.

What will the pass marks be for the SQE?

The pass mark for each sitting of the SQE will be set by the Assessment Board in accordance with the SQE Marking and Standard Setting Policy [<https://sqa.sra.org.uk/policies/mark-and-standard-setting-policy>] .

There is not one fixed pass mark for the assessment and there are no quotas for the allocation of grades. The pass mark for both SQE1 and SQE2 can vary to make sure that the passing standard of the assessment remains consistently at the correct level from one sitting to the next. The pass mark will be published after each Assessment Board and will also be included with the candidate's results.

Is it possible for us to have the exams always in the same week of the month or not?

We have previously said that we will aim for assessment dates that are within the same weeks of the same months, as far as possible. However, there are a number of factors to balance in selecting these dates, including ensuring that we have the best possible test centre coverage and seat availability as possible.

To assist stakeholders in their planning, the weeks we are aiming to start assessments for each relevant assessment window is as follows:

- SQE1: third week of the month
- SQE2: final week of the month

However, these are indicative only. Specific dates will be published at least 12 months before the relevant assessment, or sooner if possible.



Thinking of becoming a solicitor in the future

Open all [#]

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

Our transitional arrangements [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>] 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 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>], 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?

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 [https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking#heading_01fd].

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

Yes, you'll need to take the SQE.

To qualify as a solicitor you will need to:

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

The LPC route to qualification will also remain open until 31 December 2032 for any candidate who meet our transitional requirements.

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>]

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 SQE, 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 confirmed 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 am interested in taking the SQE. 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 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/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 SQE affect me?

The SQE 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)

Open all [#]

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 continue to qualify as a solicitor through the LPC current route [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/>] .

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 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/>]
- complete a PRT [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/period-recognised-training/>]
- meet our character and suitability requirements [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/character-and-suitability/>]

If you are unable to complete a period of recognised training, you can ask to recognise two years' qualifying work experience and passing the SQE2 as equivalent to this.

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

We will accept two year's qualifying work experience as an equivalent 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 LPC 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 confirmed 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, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course or an Exempting Law Degree, before 1 September 2021, you can qualify under the LPC route under our transitional arrangements

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>] . See the circumstances in which we will recognise QLD and CPE courses which start after 1 September 2021.

Solicitor apprenticeships

Open all [#]

What is the apprenticeship standard?

The solicitor apprenticeship standard describes the skills, knowledge, and behaviours required to qualify as a solicitor.

The solicitor apprenticeship standard is based on the Statement of Solicitor Competence [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/threshold-standard/>] . It is set out in full on the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

[<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/solicitor-v1-0>] website, alongside the associated assessment plan

[<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/1091/solicitor.pdf>] .

Your employer will make sure you meet the requirements of the solicitor apprenticeship standard. We are responsible for ensuring standards at the point of qualification through the SQE [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/>] .

How is the solicitor apprenticeship assessed?

Employment skills and apprenticeship policy is a devolved matter and the Welsh government has not adopted the Trailblazer approach.

The end-point assessment for the solicitor apprenticeship is SQE2 [<https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking/>], which assesses practical legal skills and knowledge. Candidates must sit SQE2 at the end of the solicitor apprenticeship programme once the employer and the training provider have confirmed to the end point assessment organisation that the apprentice has met all gateway requirements.

However, as with all aspiring solicitors from September 2021, solicitor apprentices must complete all the elements of the SQE [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/>] to qualify as a solicitor. They need:

- a degree or equivalent [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/degree-equivalent/>] - an apprentice who has successfully completed the solicitor apprenticeship, which is a level 7 qualification, will have met this requirement.
- to pass SQE1 and SQE2 [<https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking/>] – SQE1 will form part of the on-programme assessment in the apprenticeship and SQE2 is the end-point assessment.
- two years' qualifying work experience [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/>] – an apprentice who has successfully completed the solicitor apprenticeship will have met this requirement'.
- to meet our character and suitability [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>]

The first SQE1 sitting will be in November 2021 and SQE2 will follow in April 2022.

There is no time limit between completing the apprenticeship and applying for admission as a solicitor.

What are the entry requirements for the solicitor apprenticeship?

Entry requirements, such as previous qualifications, are set by individual employers. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education recommends minimum entry requirements

[<https://www.instituteofapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/solicitor-v1-0>] for the solicitor apprenticeship.

Is there a solicitor apprenticeship in Wales?

The Welsh Government has approved a Level 7 Higher Apprenticeship framework [<https://acwcerts.co.uk/web/>] leading to qualification as a solicitor. More information on apprenticeships in Wales can be found on the Welsh Government [<https://gov.wales/become-apprentice>] website.

Do solicitor apprentices get paid?

Apprentices are employees and therefore earn as they learn. There is a minimum apprenticeship salary but employers can exceed this.

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We do not have oversight of employers or training providers for the solicitor apprenticeship. If an apprentice solicitor is unhappy with any aspect of their apprenticeship, they should raise this with their employer and training provider. If after this the apprentice does not feel that their complaint is being addressed, they should contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency. [<https://www.gov.uk/complain-further-education-apprenticeship>]

Do solicitor apprentices need to be registered with the SRA?

No, apprentices do not need to be registered with us nor do we need to be told they have started their apprenticeship. Apprentices will only register with us when they have successfully completed their solicitor apprenticeship and are ready to apply for admission as a solicitor.

Apprentices will need to complete the registration process on the SQE assessment website to book their assessments.

Do universities or training providers need SRA validation or authorisation to run a solicitor apprenticeship?

No, we do not authorise or validate universities or training providers for the solicitor apprenticeship. Neither do we specify what training a solicitor apprentice should receive.

In England, the authorisation of apprenticeship training providers is undertaken by Department for Education, through the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who admit training providers to their Register of Training Organisations [<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>].

Do employers or law firms recruiting apprentices need to be registered with the SRA?

No, employers or firms do not need to be authorised by or registered with the SRA to recruit apprentices.

What information is available for employers?

You can find out more about employing an apprentice in England on the GOV.UK [<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>] website.

The GOV.UK [<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>] website also explains what level of government funding is available for each apprenticeship.