

Notes on Applications for a Certificate of Exemption from the Common Professional Examination

Education and Training Unit
Version 1

1. These notes should be regarded as applying only to persons wishing to qualify as solicitors.
2. An application for a certificate of exemption from the Common Professional Examination does not constitute an application to enrol as a student member of the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) or for a certificate of completion of the academic stage of training.
3. A person who wishes to be admitted to the roll of solicitors in England and Wales is required to complete the following stages of training:
 - (i) The academic stage of training
 - (ii) The vocational stage of training, which comprises
 - a) a recognised Legal Practice Course
 - b) two years' service under a training contract
 - c) a Professional Skills Course

The academic stage of training may be completed by one of several different routes, but all students are required to enrol as a student member of the SRA and obtain a certificate of completion of the academic stage of training before they may commence a Legal Practice Course. To obtain a certificate of completion of the academic stage of training, the applicant must have either

- (i) graduated with a qualifying law degree within the last seven years, or
 - (ii) passed a Common Professional Examination within the last seven years, or
 - (iii) obtained a recognised Graduate Diploma in Law within the last seven years, or
 - (iv) obtained a certificate of exemption from the Common Professional Examination.
4. A Certificate of Exemption from the Common Professional Examination may be issued to applicants in the following categories:
 - (i) A person who obtained a qualifying law degree or recognised Graduate Diploma in Law or passed a Common Professional Examination more than seven years ago but has been employed in the legal profession and maintained a sound working knowledge of the foundations of legal knowledge. Revalidation

of qualifications obtained more than seven years ago is a discretionary process and the discretion is unlikely to be exercised where an applicant's qualifications were obtained more than 10 years previously.

- (ii) A person who has obtained a law degree at a university overseas, where the syllabus followed in each of the foundations of legal knowledge is accepted by the SRA as being substantially equivalent to the Common Professional Examination syllabus.
 - (iii) Fellows of the Institute of Legal Executives who have passed the Institute's Higher Diploma in Law (Level 4) examinations in each of the foundations of legal knowledge.
 - (iv) Members of the Institute of Legal Executives who have passed the Institute's Higher Diploma in Law (Level 4) examinations in each of the foundations of legal knowledge and who have gained at least three years qualifying legal experience since reaching the age of 18 years.
5. Partial exemption will only be granted to students eligible for exemption from four or more subjects.
6. A person applying for a certificate of exemption from the Common Professional Examination is required to complete an application form and submit it to the SRA together with supporting documentation as detailed below.
- (i) If you were awarded a law degree, passed a Common Professional Examination or obtained a recognised Graduate Diploma in Law more than seven years ago, you are required to submit a certified true copy of your degree certificate, an original degree transcript and a letter from a senior member of the solicitors' practice or legal department where you are employed, stating the dates and nature of your employment and confirming your current competence in the foundations of legal knowledge.
 - (ii) If you are an overseas law graduate, you are required to submit a certified true copy of your degree certificate, your original degree transcript and a course syllabus; if the degree was awarded more than seven years ago, references confirming the dates and nature of your employment within the legal profession.
 - (iii) If you are a Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives you must submit a certified true copy of your certificate of admission to Fellowship of the Institute and certificates of passing the Institute's Higher Diploma in Law (Level 4) examinations in all foundations of legal knowledge.
 - (iv) If you are a Member of the Institute of Legal Executives you must submit a certified true copy of your certificate of admission to Membership of the Institute, certificates of passing the Institute's Part II (Membership) examinations in each of the foundations of legal knowledge, a certified true copy of your birth certificate and a letter from your employers confirming that you have had at least three years qualifying employment within the legal profession since reaching the age of 18 years. Members and Fellows seeking full exemption from the CPE will

be required to have passed the papers necessary to gain full exemption from the CPE in one four year block within seven years of gaining membership and commenced the Legal Practice Course.

7. A certificate of exemption from the Common Professional Examination will be valid for two years from the date of issue.
8. The granting of a certificate of exemption from the Common Professional Examination offers no guarantee of a place on a Legal Practice Course. Nor does it guarantee the offer of a training contract or employment as a solicitor.