

News release

SQE fees confirmed and transitional arrangements updated

30 July 2020

We have confirmed that the candidate fee for the new Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) will be £3,980. We will also give greater flexibility for universities and students around transition to the new assessment, in the light of Covid-19.

When it is introduced in September 2021, the £3,980 fee for taking both SQE assessments will cover:

- SQE1 - with a fee of £1,558 for the two examinations consisting of 180 questions each testing candidates' functioning legal knowledge.
- SQE2 - with a fee of £2,422 for the written and oral tasks testing both practical legal knowledge and skills, covering advocacy, client interviewing (with written attendance note/legal analysis), legal research, legal writing, legal drafting and case and matter analysis.

Ethics and professional conduct are tested throughout both SQE1 and 2.

The costs are in line with £3,000-£4,500 figure set out in the SRA's original 2018 fee range estimates. The fees do not include training costs, which will vary depending on a candidate's choices.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive of the SRA, said: "Our priority is creating a single rigorous assessment that gives everyone confidence that aspiring solicitors meet high, consistent standards at the point of entry into the profession. We also need to make sure the SQE is value for money and we are today confirming competitive assessment fees well within the original estimates.

"In the current system, many people are put off by the high up-front costs of the Legal Practice Course - up to almost £17,000 - with no guarantee of a training contract. The SQE should give people more training options and more affordable ways to qualify, including earn-as-you-learn routes such as apprenticeships."

Subject to approval from the Legal Services Board, the SQE will be introduced in September 2021. The assessments will be delivered by Kaplan, our assessment provider, with the first SQE1 sitting in November 2021 and the first SQE2 sitting in April 2022.

We have also updated our planned transitional arrangements for students taking qualifying law degrees (QLDs) and Common Professional Examination courses (CPEs) starting in autumn 2021.

Some universities have told us that they would welcome a longer period running these courses as they prepare their new SQE programmes, given the significant challenges managing the impacts of Covid-19.

We have responded by updating our approach so that we will extend our validation of QLDs and CPEs to courses which start any time before 31 December 2021, provided students accept their offer on or before 31 August 2021.

The update means that students who have accepted an offer for a QLD or CPE on or before 31 August 2021, and who go on to start their course on or before 31 December 2021, will now have a choice. They can qualify under the old system until 2032, or through the new SQE. This offers greater flexibility to training providers and students planning on starting a law degree - or law conversion - in 2021.

Full details are available in guidance on our website

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>], including the different transition arrangements for those who have deferred entry for these courses from September 2020 to 2021, as well as those who have accepted an offer of a training contract.

Paul Philip added: “It will be some time before the longer-term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic are properly understood but we want to give some extra time to prepare for SQE for those who need it. Our changes to the transition arrangements provide more flexibility for both students and universities, as we introduce SQE in 2021.”

We have also today published a final:

- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) risk assessment
[<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/edi-risk-assessment/>]
updating our May 2020 draft. This incorporates feedback from thousands of stakeholders, including the recent independent analysis of the Bridge Group. [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2020-press-release-archive/sqe-for-diversity/>]
It concludes that the potential EDI benefits of the SQE outweigh the risks, while also proposing a range of mitigations to manage these risks.
- assessment specification for SQE2 [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/archive/sqe2-assessment-specification/>] In response to feedback on the draft - including 49 responses to a survey - we have updated details of how and when negotiation will be assessed. We will also publish sample questions and guidance later this year.

The introduction of the SQE is subject to final approval from the Legal Services Board (LSB). WE will be submitting its application to the LSB shortly.

About Kaplan

Kaplan is the assessment provider for the Solicitors Qualifying Examination [<https://kaplan.co.uk/insights/article-detail/insights/2018/08/01/kaplan-appointed-as-sqe-assessment-organisation>] . It is a leading education and assessment organisation operating in more than 30 countries, offering professional training [<https://kaplan.co.uk/>] , test preparation, languages programmes [<https://www.kaplaninternational.com/>] , university preparation [<https://www.kaplanpathways.com/>] , and higher education. Kaplan is a subsidiary of Graham Holdings Company (NYSE: GHC) and its largest division.

About the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)

Due to be introduced in September 2021, the SQE is a new single, rigorous assessment for qualifying solicitors. With more than 100 different organisations currently setting and marking exams, it aims to address the problem that it is not currently possible to have full confidence that everyone who qualifies as a solicitor has met the same high standard. In order to qualify through the SQE, you will need:

- a degree or equivalent
- 2 years' experience providing legal services
- to pass two stages of assessment - SQE1 testing functional legal knowledge and SQE2 focused on practical legal skills and knowledge. Ethics and professional conduct are tested throughout.
- to meet our character and suitability criteria.

Read further information on the SQE [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/>] .