



Academic Stage Handbook

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Academic Stage Handbook

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Handbook has been jointly produced by the Bar Standards Board and the Solicitors Regulation Authority. It is the official reference document for providers of all of the of Qualifying Law Degrees (QLDs), the Common Professional Examination (CPE), Exempting Law Degrees (ELDs) and collaborative arrangements of every kind that involve QLDs, the CPE or ELDs.
- 1.2 The authority for the joint regulatory work of the Bar Standards Board and the Solicitors Regulation Authority, and for this Handbook, is the Joint Statement issued in 1999 by the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar on the completion of the initial, or academic, stage of training by obtaining an undergraduate degree.
- 1.3 The BSB and the SRA have removed duplication of oversight of academic standards and quality with that of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The QAA framework constitutes a robust academic and educational regime, and we rely on the required compliance by Higher Education Institutions with the QAA's Quality Code for Higher Education, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and the Law Benchmark Statement, drawing on the outputs of QAA review for indicators of risk to the provision.
- 1.4 We continue to monitor the further requirements included in the Joint Statement.
- 1.5 This Handbook is therefore the reference point for:
- Those wishing to offer any educational course validated as leading to a professional legal qualification for those wishing to become solicitors or barristers in England and Wales;
 - Those wishing to train for a legal profession as a barrister or solicitor;
 - Sponsors of those wishing to train for a legal profession as a barrister or solicitor;
 - Clients and members of the lay public interested in the standards required for the education of members of the legal profession.
- 1.6 This Handbook details how the BSB and the SRA validate programmes that lead to the completion of the academic stage of training for students wishing to become solicitors and barristers in England and Wales. This process of validation and revalidation includes the completion by providers of the Self-Declaration Form used in the monitoring process. A copy of this is provided as [Appendix 2](#).

2 Bar Standards Board: Introduction to the Academic Stage

- 2.1 The Bar Standards Board (BSB) is the regulatory arm of the General Council of the Bar, and is responsible for the education and training requirements for

- barristers. The full requirements are set out in the Bar Training Regulations.¹
- 2.2 The BSB works together with the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) on the Academic Stage. Please note that the requirements of the BSB and SRA are not always identical. This handbook will indicate where the requirements differ.
- 2.3 Qualification for practice as a barrister consists of the following stages:
- i) The Academic Stage
 - ii) The Vocational Stage
 - iii) The Professional Stage
- 2.4 The Academic Stage is usually completed either by undertaking a recognised Qualifying Law Degree, or by undertaking another acceptable degree, and then passing a Common Professional Examination.
- 2.5 For the full range of routes to completion of the academic stage, see the relevant sections in [Appendix 3](#).
- 2.6 This Handbook sets out the various rules, regulations and policies that govern completion of the Academic Stage for the purpose of qualification as a barrister.
- 2.7 The BSB has delegated authority in relation to individual student applications to the Academic Stage Panel of its Qualifications Committee. Where the Handbook suggests that you contact the BSB's Academic Stage Office, or for any other general information on the Academic Stage, please contact:

Academic Stage Office
Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7HZ
DX 240 LDE

Tel: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217

academicstage@barstandardsboard.org.uk

3 Solicitors Regulation Authority: Introduction to the Academic Stage

- 3.1 The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is the independent regulatory body of the Law Society of England, and its responsibilities include the education and training requirements for solicitors.
- 3.2 Qualification for practice as a solicitor consists of the following stages:
- i) The Academic Stage

¹ These are available on the Bar Standards Board webpage: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/>

- ii) The Vocational Stage
- 3.3 The Academic Stage is usually completed either by undertaking a recognised Qualifying Law Degree, or by undertaking another degree, and then passing a Common Professional Examination.
- 3.4 For the full range of routes to completion of the academic stage, see the relevant sections in [Appendix 4](#).
- 3.5 The SRA is administering the academic stage of education and training for barristers and solicitors on behalf of both regulators. Enquiries about any of the regulatory requirements for validation and revalidation should be directed as follows:

Regulation and Education
Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN
DX 720293 BIRMINGHAM 47
Tel: 0370 606 2555

ETUQS@sra.org.uk

Academic Stage Handbook: Part One

Qualifying Law Degrees

1 Course of Study

a Curriculum

Curriculum content for an award to be recognised as a Qualifying Law Degree (QLD) must be as specified in the Joint Statement and Supplement (see [Appendix 1](#)).

b Course structure and duration

The study of legal subjects must be not less than two years out of a three or four year course of study, i.e. 240 credits in a 360 or 480 credit degree programme. Some study of legal subjects must take place in the final year of the course. The coverage of the Foundation Subjects shall amount to not less than 180 credits.

2 Teaching and Learning

a Teaching and learning methodologies and strategies are not determined by the regulatory bodies, nor is the mode of study. However, teaching and learning methods must enable students to acquire knowledge and understanding of the fundamental doctrines and principles which underpin the law of England and Wales, specifically the Foundations of Legal Knowledge.

b In addition, students must also be enabled to obtain the general and specific transferable skills required.

3 Entry Requirements for a QLD

Entry requirements for programmes accredited as QLDs (including credits for accredited prior learning and credit transfer) will be set by the awarding institution.

4 Assessment and Progression Regulations

a Coursework and Examinations

There is no prescribed assessment method for assessing QLDs.

b Compensation and Condonation

At present, the issue is dealt with as follows:

- For the SRA, [Appendix 4](#), paragraphs 1.9 to 1.11
- For the BSB, [Appendix 3](#), paragraphs 2.11 to 2.12

c Academic appeals

Institutions must have mechanisms in place to deal with academic appeals against assessment processes and decisions.

d Academic offences

Providers must inform students that in accordance with the [SRA Suitability Test 2011](#), deliberate academic misconduct may result in a person being refused admission as a solicitor.

Guidance on academic misconduct is provided in the Bar Professional Training Course Handbook, available for download from the BSB website at the following link:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/how-to-apply-for-the-bptc/>.

e Student conduct and disciplinary matters

Providers must inform students that in accordance with the [SRA Suitability Test 2011](#), any behaviour not compatible with that expected of a prospective solicitor or authorised role holder may result in a person being refused admission as a solicitor.

Guidance on misconduct is provided in the Bar Professional Training Course Handbook, available for download from the BSB website at the following link:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/how-to-apply-for-the-bptc/>.

f Complaints procedures

i Institutions must have a comprehensive complaints procedure, for use by students and others, as appropriate.

ii As a general rule, neither the BSB nor the SRA involve themselves in complaints / disputes between students and providers, since these are a matter between the two parties. Students should therefore direct any complaints to their providers, on the basis that each University has its own standard procedure for dealing with complaints. Students must exhaust the internal appeals and complaints procedures, and refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and/or the QAA Concerns Scheme, if they choose to do so.

iii As far as the BSB is concerned, complaints should only be directed to them when it is their own regulations that are being disputed.

iv As far as the SRA is concerned, once internal and external complaints processes are complete, students may refer the matter to the SRA who will then consider whether any discretionary action is required.

5 Resources

Provider institutions must comply with at least the minimum resource requirements stipulated by QAA as regards staff, library and information technology provision, and general facilities for students.

6 Collaborative Provision

The requirements and guidance for all types of collaborative arrangement are dealt with in Part Four of this handbook.

7 Quality Assurance of QLDs

a Procedures for the validation and revalidation of QLDs

At the end of 2013, the BSB and the SRA identified a new approach which allows them to:

- focus resources on ensuring that the requirements of the Joint Statement are met in relation to curriculum content and assessment requirements for validated programmes, and
- re-focus interests in academic quality and standards by relying on a provider's compliance with the QAA Quality Code, and drawing on the outputs of QAA review for indicators of risk to the provision.

This approach, which took effect from 1 January 2014, requires providers to self-certify compliance with the Joint Statement. The Joint Statement will remain in place until at least the end of the 2017-2018 academic year.

This is monitored by the SRA, on behalf of both regulators.

b Schedule and time limits for validation

New programmes will normally be validated for three years in the first instance, after which the revalidation period will normally be five years. In either case, a shorter period may be imposed if concerns are identified.

If there are any fees outstanding, programmes will not be validated or revalidated.

c Conditional approval

Approval for validations and revalidations may be subject to certain conditions being met. All conditions must be satisfied before delivery of the programme can commence.

d Appeals against validation decisions

In the event of a proposed validation or revalidation not being approved, further discussion should take place between the potential or existing provider that has

made the appeal and the SRA administrators, acting on behalf of both regulatory bodies. If disagreement over a validation decision cannot be resolved by informal means, then a separate Review Board will be appointed jointly by the BSB and the SRA. The Review Board will make a decision on the evidence provided.

e Triggered visits

In addition to the normal revalidation process, QLD providers may be subject to a triggered visit if a cause for concern that requires investigation is identified.

f Withdrawal of validation

i Withdrawal of the validation of a QLD programme by the regulatory bodies may occur if there is evidence that it no longer meets minimum standards required, or is no longer viable. In no case will validation be withdrawn without discussion with the provider and relevant stakeholders.

Where a programme is to be closed, the provider must be given sufficient notice to enable them to produce a comprehensive transition plan to support any students on the programme, so that they can complete their studies as appropriate.

ii Withdrawal of a QLD programme may be initiated by a provider that decides to close a programme. However, where a programme is to be closed, a comprehensive transition plan must be put in place to support existing students on the programme so that they can complete their studies as appropriate.

8 QLD Fees

The annual fee charged to accredited providers of QLD programmes will be as agreed and set at any given time by the regulatory bodies.

Academic Stage Handbook: Part Two

Common Professional Examination

1 Entry Requirements for the CPE

- a Appendices 3 and 4 set out the entry requirements for the BSB and the SRA respectively.
- b Students who have been granted exemptions from the Academic Stage need only enrol for those subjects from which they have not been granted exemption. Appendices 3 and 4 set out the requirements of the BSB and the SRA respectively.

2 Assessment and Progression Regulations

a Compensation and Condonation

Institutions may compensate a maximum of one marginal fail in a coursework or an examination, where

- i The examination board has considered the marks of all of the elements of the assessments; and
- ii the student has obtained a minimum of 35% in one and only one element of an assessment; and
- iii the examination board is satisfied that there is strength elsewhere in the student's performance to justify compensation of the marginal fail.

CPE providers are permitted to compensate a marginal fail of one element of an assessment at the end of the first year of a part-time course.

Condonation is not permitted on the CPE course.

b Academic appeals

Institutions must have mechanisms in place to deal with academic appeals against assessment processes and decisions.

c Academic offences

Providers must inform students that in accordance with the [SRA Suitability Test 2011](#), deliberate academic misconduct may result in a person being refused admission as a solicitor.

Guidance on misconduct is provided in the Bar Professional Training Course Handbook, available for download from the BSB website at the following link:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/how-to-apply-for-the-bptc/>.

d Student conduct and disciplinary matters

Providers must inform students that in accordance with the [SRA Suitability Test 2011](#), any behaviour not compatible with that expected of a prospective solicitor or authorised role holder may result in a person being refused admission as a solicitor.

Guidance on academic misconduct is provided in the Bar Professional Training Course Handbook, available for download from the BSB website at the following link:

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/how-to-apply-for-the-bptc/>.

e Complaints procedures

i Institutions must have a comprehensive complaints procedure, for use by students and others, as appropriate.

ii As a general rule, neither the BSB nor the SRA involve themselves in complaints / disputes between students and providers, since these are a matter between the two parties. Students should therefore direct any complaints to their providers, on the basis that each University has its own standard procedure for dealing with complaints. Students must exhaust the internal appeals and complaints procedures, and refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and/or the QAA Concerns Scheme, if they choose to do so.

iii As far as the BSB is concerned, complaints should only be directed to them when it is their own regulations that are being disputed.

iv As far as the SRA is concerned, once internal and external complaints processes are complete, students may refer the matter to the SRA who will then consider whether any discretionary action is required.

3 Resources

Provider institutions must comply with at least the minimum resource requirements stipulated by QAA as regards staff, library and information technology provision, and general facilities for students.

4 Collaborative Provision

The requirements and guidance for all types of collaborative arrangement are dealt with in Part Four of this handbook.

5 Quality Assurance of the CPE Course

a Procedures for the validation and revalidation of the CPE course

At the end of 2013, the BSB and the SRA identified a new approach which allows them to:

- focus resources on ensuring that the requirements of the Joint Statement are met in relation to curriculum content and assessment requirements for validated programmes, and
- re-focus interests in academic quality and standards by relying on a provider's compliance with the QAA Quality Code, and drawing on the outputs of QAA review for indicators of risk to the provision.

This approach, which took effect from 1 January 2014, requires providers to self-certify compliance with the Joint Statement. The Joint Statement will remain in place until at least the end of the 2017-2018 academic year.

This is monitored by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on behalf of both regulators.

b Schedule and time limits for validation

New courses will normally be validated for three years in the first instance, after which the revalidation period will normally be five years. In either case, a shorter period may be imposed if concerns are identified.

If there are any fees outstanding, programmes will not be validated or revalidated.

c Conditional approval

Approval for validations and revalidations may be subject to certain conditions being met. All conditions must be satisfied before delivery of the programme can commence.

d Appeals against validation decisions

In the event of a proposed validation or revalidation not being approved, further discussion should take place between the potential or existing provider that has made the appeal and the SRA administrators, acting on behalf of both regulatory bodies. If disagreement over a validation decision cannot be resolved by informal means, then a separate Review Board will be appointed jointly by the BSB and the SRA. The Review Board will make a decision on the evidence provided.

e Triggered visits

In addition to the normal revalidation process, CPE providers may be subject to a triggered visit if a cause for concern that requires investigation is identified.

f Withdrawal of validation

i Withdrawal of the validation of a CPE course by the regulatory bodies may occur if there is evidence that it no longer meets minimum standards required, or is no longer viable. In no case will validation be withdrawn without discussion with the provider and relevant stakeholders.

Where a programme is to be closed, the provider must be given sufficient notice to enable them to produce a comprehensive transition plan to support any students on the programme, so that they can complete their studies as appropriate.

ii Withdrawal of a CPE course may be initiated by a provider that decides to close a programme. However, where a programme is to be closed, a comprehensive transition plan must be put in place to support existing students on the programme so that they can complete their studies as appropriate.

6 CPE Fees

The annual fee charged to accredited providers of the CPE course will be as agreed and set at any given time by the regulatory bodies.

Academic Stage Handbook: Part Three

Exempting Law Degrees

- 1.1 An Exempting Law Degree (ELD) combines the academic stage of training with an LPC. A provider seeking validation of an ELD will need to demonstrate that the design of the course will meet both the outcomes of the Joint Statement (see [Appendix 1](#)) and the learning outcomes for the LPC.¹
- 1.2 An Integrated Course (IC) incorporates the Foundations of Legal Knowledge (as set out in the Joint Statement) and a Legal Practice Course.
- 1.3 An ELD or an IC may cover Stage 1 of the LPC alone, or Stages 1 and 2.² The SRA has not specified the period over which an ELD or an IC must be undertaken, although providers should take into account the notional learning hours identified as necessary for an LPC when designing an ELD or an IC.
- 1.4 In addition to the requirements in the Information for LPC Providers document³ for all applications for validation of an LPC, providers will need to address the following in their application for validation of a new ELD or IC:
 - the aims and objectives of the ELD / IC;
 - the point(s) at which students can and must enrol on the ELD / IC;
 - the point(s) at which student may leave the ELD / IC and any alternative award(s) available to them;
 - any admission and progression rules;
 - how the academic and vocational elements of the course are linked or integrated during the ELD / IC, with regard to teaching, learning and assessment;
 - the award made to a student on completion of the ELD / IC.
- 1.5 A provider will need to state how the assessment requirements in the Information for LPC Providers document for LPCs have been reflected in the assessment requirements for the ELD / IC. It must also demonstrate that the LPC outcomes will be assessed in a way that is equivalent to the requirements for an LPC.
- 1.6 The application will be considered by the SRA, taking into account any internal validation processes and requirements, and new validations will require a full validation event, including an SRA -appointed panel and chair.

¹ These are available via the webpage: <http://www.sra.org.uk/lpc/>

² A student who completes an Exempting Law Degree or an Integrated Course that does not cover Stage 2 of the LPC will need to complete Stage 2 separately, before they can qualify as a solicitor.

³ This is available via the webpage: <http://www.sra.org.uk/lpc/>

Academic Stage Handbook: Part Four

Collaborative Arrangements

Since September 2012, it has been acknowledged by the regulators that both QLDs and the CPE course may be awarded in collaborative arrangements.

1 Scope of validated collaborative arrangements

- a Validated collaborative arrangements may be between two institutions, or may involve consortia of several partners.
- b Validated collaborative arrangements can involve overseas partner institutions as well as those within the UK.

2 Types of validated collaborative arrangements

Various types of collaboration are recognised by the regulatory bodies, including joint programmes, franchised programmes, and articulation arrangements.

3 Distance Learning

The distance learning mode of programme delivery, whether full time or part time, is *not* considered to be a collaborative arrangement.

4 QAA Quality Code for Higher Education

Institutions that participate in collaborative arrangements will need to comply with the requirements of the [QAA Quality Code](#) in this regard.

Academic Stage Handbook: Part Five

Qualifying Foundation Degrees and Higher National Diplomas

Institutions accredited by the regulatory bodies may give credit to students who have successfully completed a foundation degree (FD) or a higher national diploma (HND) for which progression onto their QLD(s) is articulated, subject to certain conditions.

These FDs and HNDs may be provided by other institutions from those accepting the students onto their QLDs.

1 Structure of Qualifying Foundation Degrees and Higher National Diplomas

The model for progression from a FD or HND onto a QLD is 2+2, which is to say that the two years study on a FD or HND is deemed equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate law degree. Students will progress onto the second year of a QLD.

2 Conditions for Qualifying FDs and HNDs

The conditions governing the validation of qualifying FDs and HNDs are as follows:

- a Credits arising from a FD or HND which are intended to contribute towards the 240 credits in the study of legal subjects required by the Joint Statement may only be given for a subject that would be taught and assessed during the first year of the QLD onto which the FD or HND graduate is progressing;
- b Credit awarded for work-based learning undertaken on the FD or HND will not count towards the minimum of 240 credits for the study of legal subjects that must be gained on a QLD;
- c Institutions accredited by the regulatory bodies must ensure that in terms of level and content, the teaching and assessment of any legal subjects for which credits are given are at least equivalent to the teaching and assessment of those subjects as taught and assessed during the first year of their QLD(s). External Examiners to the FD or HND must confirm that this requirement is being achieved;
- d The regulatory bodies must be satisfied that the physical and human resources available to support teaching and learning on the FD or HND are at least equivalent to those available to support teaching and learning on the first year of the QLD for which progression has been articulated;

APPENDIX 1



The Law Society



Joint Statement

A Joint Statement issued in 1999 by the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar on the completion of the initial or academic stage of training by obtaining an undergraduate degree.

1. Under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 (as amended) the Law Society and Bar Council are responsible for laying down the qualification regulations in respect of those seeking to qualify as solicitors and barristers. The Law Society and Bar Council have agreed to act jointly in respect of the first or academic stage of training where that stage is satisfied by the completion of a degree or approved CPE course. This document sets out the conditions which must be satisfied in respect of undergraduate degree courses.
2. Following consultation with the Association of Law Teachers (ALT), the Committee of Heads of University Law Schools (CHULS) and the Society of Public Teachers of Law, (SPTL) the Law Society and Bar Council (the professional bodies) will recognise a course of study leading to the award of an undergraduate degree as satisfying the requirements of the initial or academic stage of training if:
 - i. The institution providing the course of study satisfies the professional bodies that adequate learning resources are provided to support the course of study, the professional bodies having regard to any advice of the Joint Committee on Standards in Legal Education or similar successor body.

- ii. The higher education institution awarding the degree of which the course of study is part has degree awarding powers conferred by the Privy Council.
- iii. The standards of achievement expected of students undertaking the course of study are set at or above the minimum level of performance as set out in the QAA Benchmark Standards for Law Degrees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.⁴
- iv. The course of study includes the study of legal subjects for the equivalent of not less than two years out of a three year or four year course of study, (for example, a student must gain not less than 240 credits in the study of legal subjects in a 360 or 480 credit degree programme) but existing mixed degrees that are currently recognised as qualifying law degrees under the Joint Announcement of January 1995 shall continue to be recognised for students embarking on such courses before a date to be specified when alternative arrangements for mixed degrees are agreed. Such date shall not be before 1 September 2001.
- v. The coverage of those legal subjects referred to in the professional bodies' qualifying regulations as the Foundations of Legal Knowledge⁵ must involve not less than one and a half years study i.e. the coverage of the Foundations shall amount to not less than 180 credits. Courses involving the study of aspects of the English Legal System will be allowed to count towards these 180 credits. The remaining half-year or 60 credits in law must be achieved by the study of legal subjects. A legal subject means the study of law broadly interpreted⁶. The professional bodies reserve the right, after consultation with the university law schools to amend the list of Foundations.
- vi. The course of study will normally be spread over the full duration of the degree course. Some study of legal subjects will be expected to take place in the final year of the degree course.⁷

⁴ It is hoped at all institutions will set their standards above the Benchmark. It should be noted that students wishing to read for the Bar however must have attained at least a lower second class honours degree.

⁵ These are set out in Schedule 2.

⁶ For example including Criminology and other socio-legal subjects.

⁷ This requirement is important for the Bar which expects all those entering the vocational stage of training to have achieved at least a lower second class honours degree.

- vii. The course of study will be one which satisfies the external examiners of the degree programme of which it forms part that, in addition to the Areas of Performance set out in the Benchmark Standards, the students on that course of study should have acquired the knowledge and general transferable skills set out in Schedule One.
3. Any law school which has problems in meeting the requirements of this Statement should contact the directors of training of training of the professional bodies who will consult with the heads of CHULS, ALT and SPTL. Where necessary, the outcome of the consultation will be reported to the respective training committees whose decision will be final.
4. The professional bodies reserve the right to issue guidance, either directly or through the providers of their vocational courses, to persons considering entry to the vocational stage of training of those areas of law that students enrolling on the vocational courses are expect to have current knowledge.
5. The institution offering the course of study will provide the professional bodies with any information about the course they may require to enable them to discharge their responsibilities under the Courts and Legal Services Act and this Statement and will permit representatives of the professional bodies to visit the institution to discuss any aspects of the course with representatives of the institutions, members of the course team and students enrolled on the course.
6. The professional bodies reserve the right to withdraw recognition from any course of study that fails to comply with the conditions set out in this Statement or fails to meet minimum standards prescribed by QAA.

Schedule One

The knowledge and transferable skills which should be addressed in any course of study leading to the award of a degree recognised by the Law Society and General Council of the Bar as satisfying the initial or academic stage of training are as follows:

a. Knowledge

Students should have acquired:

- i. Knowledge and understanding of the fundamental doctrines and principles which underpin the law of England and Wales particularly in the Foundations of Legal Knowledge;
- ii. A basic knowledge of the sources of that law, and how it is made and developed; of the institutions within which that law is administered and the personnel who practice law;
- iii. The ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a wide range of legal concepts, values, principles and rules of English law and to explain the relationship between them in a number of particular areas;
- iv. The intellectual and practical skills needed to research and analyse the law from primary resources on specific matters; and to apply the findings of such work to the solution of legal problems; and
- v. The ability to communicate these, both orally and in writing, appropriately to the needs of a variety of audiences.

b. General transferable skills

Students should be able:

- i. To apply knowledge to complex situations;
- ii. To recognise potential alternative conclusions for particular situations, and provide supporting reasons for them;
- iii. To select key relevant issues for research and to formulate them with clarity;
- iv. To use standard paper and electronic resources to produce up-to-date information;
- v. To make a personal and reasoned judgement based on an informed understanding of standard arguments in the area of law in question;
- vi. To use the English language and legal terminology with care and accuracy;
- vii. To conduct efficient searches of websites to locate relevant information; to exchange documents by email and manage information exchanges by email;
- viii. To produce word-processed text and to present it in an appropriate form.

Schedule Two

The Foundations of Legal Knowledge are:

- a. The key elements and general principles of the following areas of legal study:
 - i. Public Law, including Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights;
 - ii. Law of the European Union;

- iii. Criminal Law;
- iv. Obligations including Contract, Restitution and Tort;
- v. Property Law; and
- vi. Equity and the Law of Trusts.

In addition, students are expected to have received training in legal research.

Supplement to the 1999 Joint Statement

Mixed degrees, conversion courses and senior status degrees

Background

1. The Application to the Lord Chancellor by The Law Society and The Bar Council of 2nd August 1999 containing the Joint Statement on the Academic Stage of Legal Education specifically excluded “conversion courses, mixed degrees and senior status degrees” (para.4). This Statement covers those Degrees.

The general provisions

2. All conversion courses, mixed degrees and senior status degrees which satisfy the requirements of the Joint Statement are recognised in the same way as other Law Degrees.
3. The Learning outcomes set out in Schedules One and Two of the Joint Statement shall be required for all conversion courses, mixed degrees and senior status degrees. Certain of the general transferable skills (notably items vii and viii) may be demonstrated through exercises in non-law subjects.
4. The remainder of the Joint Statement shall apply to conversion courses, mixed degrees and senior status degrees with the modifications set out as below.

Mixed degrees

5. In any case where there is doubt as to whether there is sufficient appropriate credit, this will be considered on an ad hoc basis under the provisions of paragraph 3 of that Statement.

Senior status degrees

6. Senior status degrees cover both undergraduate and Graduate law degrees for students who have already obtained an undergraduate degree (or equivalent) in another subject.
7. Such degrees will be recognised provided that the student undertakes no less than 220 credits in the study of legal subjects and that the student satisfies the requirements of para.2 (v) concerning the Foundations of Legal Knowledge.

Conversion courses

8. Approved courses leading to the Common Professional Examination are recognised. Such courses are expected to provide an equivalent to the Foundations of Legal Knowledge set out in para.2 (v) within the one-year period of study.

APPENDIX 2

Self-Declaration Form for Providers of Qualifying Law Degrees and the Common Professional Examination

Please complete all sections of this form.

A separate form must be completed for each programme to be approved and re-approved, or where there is a major modification to an existing programme. Please submit the completed form to the SRA (who will act on its own behalf and on behalf of the BSB in recognising the programmes as meeting the requirements of the Joint Statement) within 28 days of the internal (re)validation event.

Section 1 – About the education provider

The education provider	
Name of education provider	<i>[Insert here the official name of the institution delivering the programme]</i>
Name of awarding / validating body (if different from education provider)	<i>[Insert here the official name of the institution awarding the academic award]</i>
Location(s) of delivery of programme	<i>[Insert here all the sites where the programme is taught and supporting resources for students are located]</i>
Full programme and award title	<i>[Insert here the full, official name of the programme and award title, if different]</i>
Status of programme	<input type="checkbox"/> New Programme <input type="checkbox"/> Revalidation <input type="checkbox"/> Modification to existing programme
Name of Department, School or Faculty to which the programme belongs	<i>[Insert here, e.g., School of Law or Faculty of Law and Business]</i>
Mode of delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please provide details)
Date of (re)validation event	<i>[Insert here the date of the internal validation for a new programme / revalidation.]</i>
Period of (re)validation	<i>[Insert here the period for which the programme was (re)validated]</i>
Collaborative / Franchise arrangements	
Name(s) of partner institution	<i>[Insert here the official name of each partner institution providing the programme]</i>
Type of arrangement(s)	<i>[Insert here the type of arrangement for each partner institution]</i>
Location(s) of delivery of programme	<i>[Insert here all the partner sites where the programme]</i>

	<i>is taught and supporting resources for students are located]</i>
Full programme and award title(s)	<i>[Insert here the full, official name of the programme and award title, if different, at each of the partner institutions]</i>
Mode of delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please provide details)
Date of initial collaboration	<i>[Insert here the date of the initial validation of each of the collaborative arrangements]</i>
Contact details for person responsible for submitting the form	
Name	
Job title	
Contact telephone number	
Contact email address	

Section 2 – Declaration

Declaration to be completed by the Chair of the (Re)Validation Panel / Dean of the Faculty / Head of Law School

I confirm that:

- the institution's quality assurance and enhancement processes meet / continue to meet the expectations of QAA (or QAA Scotland) as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- the programme meets / continues to meet the requirements of the Joint Statement issued by the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar on the completion of the academic stage of training (as specified in the Annex);
- the programme has been successfully (re)validated according to the institution's latest internal validation process, and I attach a copy of the validation / revalidation agreed report;
- the programme has been / will be subject to the institution's internal annual monitoring and enhancement requirements;

I am aware that failure to disclose relevant information could result in the programme no longer being recognised as leading to completion of the academic stage of training.

Printed Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

Send an electronic copy of this form to Regulation and Education within 28 days of the internal (re)validation event: ETUQS@sra.org.uk

Annex

Over and above the requirements of the Indicators set out by the QAA and QAA Scotland, the SRA and the BSB monitor the following matters to ensure compliance with the Joint Statement:

- that the programme of study requires not less than 240 academic credits in the study of legal subjects on a QLD (Joint Statement 2.iv);
- that the programme of study requires study of the seven subjects known as the Foundations of Legal Knowledge, and requires that they comprise not fewer than 180 academic credits out of the 240 academic credits for legal subjects on a QLD (Joint Statement 2.v; Schedule Two);
- that study of legal subjects on a QLD continues into the final year of the degree programme (Joint Statement 2.vi);
- that students on a QLD are acquiring the required knowledge and general transferable skills (Joint Statement Schedule One);
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rule relating to deemed passes for a QLD (Academic Stage Handbook Appendix 3, 2.13; Appendix 4, 1.16-1.17)
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rules relating to condonation and compensation for a QLD (Academic Stage Handbook Part One, 4b; Part Two, 2a; Appendix 3, 2.11--2.12; Appendix 4, 1.9-1.11);
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rule relating to the re-taking of failed modules for a QLD (Academic Stage Handbook Appendix 3, 2.14 – 2.15; 3.19 Appendix 4, 1.2, 1.18-1.20);
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rule relating to the number of attempts permitted to pass each subject on QLDs and the CPE (Academic Stage Handbook Appendix 3, 2.14-2.15; Appendix 4 1.2: 2.13-2.15);
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rule relating to time limits for QLDs and the CPE (Academic Stage Handbook Appendix 3, 2.7-2.9; 3.16--3.18; Appendix 4, 1.3-1.5; 2.9-2.11);
- that there is compliance with the Academic Stage rule relating to the qualifying pass mark on QLDs and the CPE (Academic Stage Handbook Appendix 3, 2.10; Appendix 4, 1.6-1.8);
- that there is compliance with the entry requirements for the CPE (Academic Stage Handbook Part Two, 3; Appendix 3, 3.3-3.4; 3.7-3.9; Appendix 4, 2.4--2.5).

APPENDIX 3

Bar Standards Board: Completion of the Academic Stage

Section 1: Introduction to the Academic Stage

Overview

- 1.1 Qualification for practice as a barrister consists of the following stages:
- iv) The Academic Stage
 - v) The Vocational Stage
 - vi) The Professional Stage
- 1.2 The Academic Stage is usually completed either by undertaking a recognised Qualifying Law Degree (“QLD”) or by undertaking another acceptable degree and then passing a Graduate Diploma in Law (“GDL”). This book sets out the various rules, regulations and policies that govern completion of the Academic Stage for the purpose of qualification as a barrister.

The Bar Standards Board

- 1.3 The Bar Standards Board is the regulatory arm of the General Council of the Bar and is responsible for the education and training requirements for barristers. The requirements are set out in the Bar Training Rules (section 4B of the BSB Handbook).
- 1.4 The BSB’s requirements for completion of the Academic Stage of Training for the Bar are completely separate to those of the SRA; therefore, individual applications must be submitted to the BSB.
- It should never be assumed that completion of the Academic Stage for the purpose of the SRA equates to completion of the Academic Stage for the purpose of the BSB.**
- 1.5 The BSB has delegated authority in relation to individual student applications to the Academic Stage Panel of the Qualifications Committee.

Content of the Academic Stage

- 1.6 The purpose of the Academic Stage is to ensure that those who wish to qualify as barristers have both an appropriate level of academic ability and a sufficient body of knowledge and understanding of English law, which may be assumed and built upon during the Vocational Stage.
- 1.7 The Academic Stage covers the following foundations of legal knowledge (“foundation subjects”):

- i) Public Law (including Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights)
- ii) Law of the European Union
- iii) Criminal Law
- iv) Obligations (including Contract, Restitution and Tort)
- v) Property Law
- vi) Equity and the Law of Trusts

Further information

- 1.8 Where this document suggests that you contact the BSB's Academic Stage Office, or for any other general information on the Academic Stage, please contact:

academicstage@barstandardsboard.org.uk

The Bar Standards Board
289-293 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7HZ

Tel: 020 7611 1444
Fax: 020 7831 9217

www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

Application forms, general application guidelines and other reference documents, and GDL/QLD course lists are available at:

<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/forms-and-guidelines/academic-stage-forms/>

Unless a waiver of the requirements of rQ28.1 has been granted by the BSB, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they have completed the Academic Stage of Training for the Bar and provided evidence thereof to their chosen Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) provider by the date of commencement of the BPTC. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in the student not being permitted to commence the BPTC.

Section 2: Completion of the Academic Stage through a Qualifying Law Degree

Overview

- 2.1 In order to complete the Academic Stage through a QLD for the purpose of qualifying as a barrister, a student must:
- i) hold a degree that is recognised as a QLD;
 - ii) have been awarded the degree at or above the minimum standard; and
 - iii) not have reached the time after which a QLD is considered to be 'stale'.
- 2.2 Further details of each of these requirements are set out below.

Recognition of a Qualifying Law Degree

- 2.3 A degree will be recognised as a QLD if it satisfies the requirements set out in the Joint Statement 1999. A list of QLD courses is available from the BSB and can be downloaded from its website.

The minimum standard and the exercise of discretion

- 2.4 The minimum standard for a QLD undertaken for the purpose of completion of the Academic Stage for qualification as a barrister is lower second class honours (ie "a II(ii)").
- 2.5 The BSB has a special discretion to allow students to proceed without meeting the minimum standard. This discretion will only be exercised rarely and where there are exceptional circumstances. The following are the criteria that must be met in order for discretion to be exercised:
- i) there is clear evidence (in terms of the majority of grades achieved, especially in the foundation subjects) that the student is academically of second class quality overall;
 - ii) it appears that the student's failure to achieve a second class degree was directly attributable to a temporary cause which prevented/impeded him/her fulfilling his/her full academic potential, which can be securely demonstrated as not having already been taken into account by the awarding institution in the award of the third class degree, for good reason beyond the student's control: mitigating circumstances will not be taken into consideration twice;
 - iii) it plainly appears that this cause is not of such a character as to render the student unsuitable to practise at the Bar; and
 - iv) there is clear motivation to qualify and practise at the Bar.
- 2.6 The application form for the exercise of discretion may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website. Students are advised not to apply unless they believe that they meet all

of the above criteria; however, the fact that these criteria are met **will not** guarantee approval.

Time-limits for completion of a Qualifying Law Degree

- 2.7 From 1 September 2011, the maximum time limit for completion of a QLD (studied either full-time, part-time or by distance learning) is six years.
- 2.8 A QLD that falls outside the period specified above may, where there are exceptional circumstances, be awarded by a QLD provider.
- 2.9 If students have what they consider to be exceptional circumstances, preventing them from completing the QLD within the time limit, they should apply directly to their QLD provider institution for an extension of time. Provider institutions should apply their own assessment policies and regulations in assessing such applications.

The pass mark

- 2.10 All foundation subjects on a QLD must be passed with at least 40%, regardless of any lower pass mark set by institutions. If an institution has a pass mark below 40%, it must ensure that all students who are intending to qualify as barristers are aware that they must obtain at least 40% in each foundation subject.

Marginal failure

- 2.11 A QLD provider institution may compensate or condone a single marginal failure of a foundation subject where the following requirements are satisfied:
- i) The provider institution's assessment regulations permit condonation and/or compensation; and
 - ii) There are exceptional circumstances in the student's case that are likely to have impacted on the student's performance; and
 - iii) The mark actually attained by the student in the subject to be condoned or compensated is not less than 35%; and
 - iv) There is evidence of the student's academic strength across the entire degree programme.
- 2.12 A student who fails a foundation subject that is not condoned must pass the relevant foundation subject at the institution which awarded the degree or pass the whole of the relevant subject in the GDL, within the maximum of three attempts and subject to the degree being awarded at lower second class honours or above. Any student undertaking the GDL route for this purpose must first apply for and obtain a Certificate of Partial Exemption from the Academic Stage of training from the BSB (please see para 3.22).

Deemed passes

- 2.13 A QLD provider institution may, if its assessment regulations permit it, deem a student to have passed one or more subjects that he or she failed or did not take as a result of illness, bereavement or other substantial cause beyond his or her control and so award a QLD. If this results in the student being awarded a law degree without a classification, he or she will need to apply for the exercise of discretion as set out above.

Maximum number of attempts

- 2.14 The maximum number of attempts permitted for any foundation subject is normally three. Where all three attempts have been exhausted, either within a law degree, the GDL or a combination thereof, the Academic Stage can only be satisfied by completing a full QLD or GDL programme afresh. In exceptional circumstances, a QLD provider institution may allow additional attempts at foundation subjects.
- 2.15 Where a foundation subject is taught and assessed as two separate units (eg, Criminal Law I and Criminal Law II), students are permitted three attempts at each unit, rather than collectively for the subject.

Credit Transfer

- 2.16 A QLD provider may allow students to transfer credit from another QLD provider without needing the approval of the BSB.

Exemptions from foundation subjects

- 2.17 Qualifications on which a UK/Republic of Ireland university grants exemptions from foundation subjects must be considered by the BSB to ascertain whether or not exemption should be accorded to that qualification. Individual advice will often need to be given as the qualification on which the exemption is based may not meet the BSB's requirements, for example it may be considered 'stale' (see paras 4.7 to 4.13) or be based on a degree which does not meet the Bar's minimum entry requirement (see paras 2.4 to 2.6).
- 2.18 Unless previously approved by the BSB, a law degree will **not** be accepted as satisfying the Academic Stage of training for the Bar where the graduate has been granted exemption from one or more of the foundation subjects by:
- Passing a diploma which contains some of the foundation subjects;
 - Passing law papers in the examinations of professional bodies;
 - Passes in the Business Technology Education Council's HND and HNC law papers or foundation degrees which do not have qualifying status; or
 - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Section 3: Completion of the Academic Stage through the Graduate Diploma in Law

Overview

- 3.1 In order to complete the Academic Stage through the GDL, a student must:
- i) be eligible to undertake the GDL in accordance with the rules and regulations of the BSB;
 - ii) complete a GDL course that has been validated by the SRA and BSB;
 - iii) pass all foundation subjects plus one other area of legal study, except where exemptions have been granted by the BSB; and
 - iv) not have reached the time after which the GDL is considered to be 'stale'.
- 3.2 Further details of each of these requirements are set out below.

Eligibility

- 3.3 In order to be eligible to undertake the GDL for the purpose of qualification as a barrister, a student must:
- i) hold a UK/Republic of Ireland degree, awarded at or above the minimum standard; or
 - ii) have been granted a Certificate of Academic Standing by the BSB.
- 3.4 Students who complete the GDL without meeting the BSB's eligibility requirements (eg because they enrolled on the course on the basis of the SRA's eligibility requirements) have not completed the Academic Stage for the purpose of qualification as a barrister and so are not eligible to commence the BPTC.

Recognition of a GDL

- 3.5 A list of approved GDL courses is available from the BSB and can be downloaded from its website.
- 3.6 The Hong Kong Common Professional Examination Certificate in Laws is **not** a course approved by the JASB as a GDL.

The minimum standard and the exercise of discretion

- 3.7 The minimum standard for any degree undertaken for the purpose of eligibility to undertake the GDL for completion of the Academic Stage for qualification as a barrister is lower second class honours (ie "a II(ii)").
- 3.8 The BSB has a special discretion to allow students to proceed without meeting the minimum standard. This discretion will only be exercised rarely and where there are exceptional circumstances. The following are the criteria that must be met in order for discretion to be exercised:

- i) there is clear evidence (in terms of the majority of grades achieved) that the student is academically of second class quality overall;
 - ii) it appears that the student's failure to achieve a second class degree was directly attributable to a temporary cause which prevented/impeded him/her fulfilling his/her full academic potential, which can be securely demonstrated as not having already been taken into account by the awarding institution in the award of the third class degree, for good reason beyond the student's control; mitigating circumstances will not be taken into consideration twice;
 - iii) it plainly appears that this cause is not of such a character as to render the student unsuitable to practise at the Bar; and
 - iv) there is clear motivation to qualify and practise at the Bar.
- 3.9 The application form for the exercise of discretion may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website. Students are advised not to apply unless they believe that they meet all of the above criteria; however, the fact that these criteria are met **will not** guarantee approval.

Deemed passes

- 3.10 A student who has been awarded a degree without a classification (eg an aegrotat degree awarded as a result of illness) should apply for discretion as set out above.

Certificates of Academic Standing

- 3.11 Students with degrees from outside the UK/Republic of Ireland who wish to undertake the GDL must apply to the BSB for a Certificate of Academic Standing. The BSB will issue a Certificate of Academic Standing if it is satisfied that the qualifications held are equivalent to a UK honours degree of at least lower second class.
- 3.12 Students with non-standard UK/Republic of Ireland degrees (ie degrees that are awarded without a classification) must also apply for a Certificate of Academic Standing. This includes students who hold a post-graduate degree without an undergraduate degree. Students who hold UK medical, dental or veterinary degrees should contact the Academic Stage Office for further advice.
- 3.13 Students who do not hold any degree qualifications must apply for a Certificate of Academic Standing as mature non-graduate students. The term "mature" has no particular reference to a student's age; however, applicants must be able to demonstrate considerable experience or exceptional ability in an academic, professional, business, or administrative field in order to qualify by this route.
- 3.14 Please note that a Certificate of Academic Standing issued by the SRA does **not** certify eligibility to undertake the GDL for the purpose of qualification as a barrister.

- 3.15 The application form for a Certificate of Academic Standing may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website.

Time-limits for completion of the GDL

- 3.16 A full-time GDL should normally be completed with all examinations and/or assessments passed in not less than one year and not more than three years.
- 3.17 A part-time GDL should normally be completed with all examinations and/or assessments passed in not less than two years and not more than four years.
- 3.18 Students may apply to their GDL provider institution for an extension of time in which to complete the GDL. Provider institutions should apply their own assessment policies and regulations in assessing such applications.

Maximum number of attempts

- 3.19 The maximum number of attempts permitted for any foundation subject is normally three. Where all three attempts have been exhausted, either within a law degree, the GDL or a combination, the Academic Stage can only be satisfied by completing a full QLD or GDL programme afresh. In exceptional circumstances, a GDL provider institution may accept additional attempts at foundation subjects.

Credit Transfer

- 3.20 A GDL provider may allow students to transfer credit from another GDL provider without needing the approval of the BSB.

Exemptions from the Academic Stage of training for the Bar

Exemptions on the basis of UK degrees

- 3.21 The BSB may grant exemptions from the foundation subjects and another area of legal study where a student has passed corresponding subjects within a UK degree programme. Exemptions will only be granted where the degree on which the application is based has been awarded, the final classification is at least lower second class honours or above and the subjects studied were the same as those on the institution's own QLD. Partial exemption is unlikely to be granted to students graduating in England and Wales from an institution that does not have a QLD programme.

Exemptions on the basis of degrees awarded in the Republic of Ireland

- 3.22 As from September 2004 law degrees granted by universities in the Republic of Ireland are no longer regarded as QLDs for the purposes of completion of the Academic Stage of training for the Bar. Notwithstanding this, subject to obtaining lower second class honours or above, and applying within the time limits,

exemptions from the Academic Stage of training for the Bar may be applied for on an individual, subject by subject basis, in respect of such a degree.

Exemptions on the basis of law degrees awarded in Scotland

- 3.23 In order to be acceptable for exemptions from the Academic Stage of training for the Bar, a law degree obtained in Scotland must be an honours degree (normally a four-year course) awarded at lower second class honours or above.

Exemptions on the basis of overseas degrees or non-standard UK/Republic of Ireland degrees

- 3.24 The BSB may grant exemptions from the foundation subjects and the other area of legal study may be granted where a student has passed corresponding subjects within an overseas degree or a non-standard UK/Republic of Ireland degree. Exemptions will only be granted on the basis of a degree for which a Certificate of Academic Standing has been granted.

Exemptions on the basis of professional qualifications

- 3.25 It is open to students to apply for exemption on the basis of professional qualifications. However, such exemptions will only be granted where the relevant foundation subjects have been studied to the same breadth and depth as they would be studied on a QLD or GDL.

General

- 3.26 Only those eligible to undertake the GDL for the purpose of qualification as a barrister are eligible to apply for exemptions. This means that those who do not hold a UK/Republic of Ireland undergraduate degree of lower second class honours or above will not be eligible to apply for exemption unless and until they have obtained a Certificate of Academic Standing.
- 3.27 Exemptions remain valid for five years after the award of the degree in which the relevant subjects were passed; therefore, in order for an applicant to be able to take advantage of any exemptions granted, applications for full, or partial, exemption must be made no more than five years after the award of the relevant degree; although, it may be possible to reactive a degree which is older.
- 3.28 Any foundation subjects outstanding after exemptions have been granted must be taken and passed within the GDL and not by any other means.
- 3.29 The application forms and further guidance on making an application for exemption may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website; however, submission of such an application **must not** be taken as a guarantee that the application will be successful as all applications are assessed on an individual, subject-by-subject basis.
- 3.30 Certificates of Exemption granted by the SRA are **not** valid for completion of the Academic Stage for the purpose of qualification as a barrister.

Section 4: Completion of the Academic Stage and Commencement of the Vocational Stage

Summary

- 4.1 In order for a student to be eligible to commence the Vocational Stage (ie the BPTC):
- i) the student must have completed the requirements of the Academic Stage in full; and
 - ii) the qualifications on which completion of the Academic Stage is based must not be 'stale'.

Non-completion of the Academic Stage

- 4.2 Ordinarily, a student must have completed the requirements of the Academic Stage in full before commencing the BPTC. This means that all relevant resits must have been taken and passed and the QLD or GDL must have been awarded.
- 4.3 However, the BSB may, in exceptional circumstances, allow a student to commence the Vocational Stage before completion of the Academic Stage.
- 4.4 An application is unlikely to be granted unless:
- i) The offer of a BPTC place remains open despite the outstanding results;
 - ii) Results are outstanding in no more than one subject due to mitigating circumstances and this subject is being taken as a first attempt;
 - iii) Where the result of a law degree is awaited, there is clear evidence from the awarding university that the final, overall classification is confidently predicted to be lower second class honours or above;
 - iv) The final results of the outstanding element will be known by 1 October of the year in which the BPTC is commenced; and
 - v) Both parties accept that the student must withdraw from the BPTC if the student has not been certified as having fully and satisfactorily completed the Academic Stage of training for the Bar by 1 October of the year in which the BPTC is commenced.
- 4.5 The fact that these criteria are met will not guarantee approval. Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate that they are likely to have the necessary knowledge to commence the BPTC and that the reasons for failing to complete the Academic Stage are exceptional.
- 4.6 An application form and further guidance on making an application under this procedure may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website.

Stale qualifications

- 4.7 Students proceeding to the Vocational Stage must be able to rely upon legal knowledge which is reasonably current. For this reason, both QLDs and GDL courses have a time-limit after which they are regarded as stale.
- 4.8 The BPTC must be commenced within five years of completion of the Academic Stage, whether by means of a QLD or GDL. The same time-limit applies to any foundation subjects passed individually as a result of the granting of partial exemption.
- 4.9 The effect of this rule is that any QLD or GDL awarded before 1 January 2011 is stale for the purpose of commencement of the 2016/17 BPTC.
- 4.10 Anyone who wishes to qualify as a barrister after this time-limit is required to reactivate their stale qualifications, usually by undertaking the whole of the GDL.
- 4.11 In exceptional circumstances, the BSB may reactivate stale qualifications without requiring completion of the GDL. It will only do so where there is reliable and comprehensive evidence from an impartial and professional source that an applicant has current competence in all of the foundation subjects, eg through legal work or study.
- 4.12 An application form for reactivation may be obtained from the Academic Stage Office, or directly from the Academic Stage section of the BSB website.
- 4.13 It is very unlikely that an application for reactivation will be approved in respect of qualifications that are eight years old or more.

APPENDIX 4

Solicitors Regulation Authority: Completion of the Academic Stage

1 Qualifying Law Degree (QLD)

Recognition of a Qualifying Law Degree

- 1.1 The SRA will recognise a degree as a QLD if it satisfies the requirements set out in the Joint Statement 1999. A list of QLD courses that have been approved is available from the SRA, and can be downloaded from its website.

Maximum number of attempts

- 1.2 The maximum number of attempts permitted for any of the foundations of legal knowledge subjects within a qualifying law degree is normally three.

Time-limits for completion of a Qualifying Law Degree

- 1.3 The maximum time limit for completion of a qualifying law degree (studied either full-time, part-time or by distance learning) is 6 years.
- 1.4 A qualifying law degree that falls outside the period specified above may, where there are exceptional circumstances, be recognised by the SRA.
- 1.5 If students have what they consider to be exceptional circumstances, preventing them from completing the qualifying law degree within the time limit, they should apply directly to their provider institution for an extension of time. Provider institutions should apply their own assessment policies and regulations in assessing such applications.

The pass mark

- 1.6 The SRA's pass mark for a qualifying law degree is 40% - regardless of any pass mark set by provider institutions.
- 1.7 Provider institutions that set their own pass mark at lower than 40% have a responsibility to inform all students who intend to qualify as a solicitor that the QLD pass mark set by the SRA is 40%.
- 1.8 In addition, provider institutions must only certify on their annual block certificates that a student has attained a QLD if the student in question has achieved a mark of 40% or higher.

Marginal failure

- 1.9 Compensation is a judgement by a board of examiners who decide that a strong performance by a student, evidencing achievement of the learning outcomes and educational aims of the stage as a whole, may be used as the basis for the

award of credit in respect of a marginally failed pass mark requirement in a particular module. Condonation is a judgement by a board of examiners who decide that, in consideration of the overall performance of a student, and of any extenuating circumstances, a module that has been marginally failed can be awarded a pass, without incurring a penalty.

- 1.10 A provider institution may exercise its discretion to condone **or** compensate one - and only one - of the seven foundations of legal knowledge subjects.
- 1.11 Such a decision to condone or compensate a subject may be taken only if the following requirements are satisfied:
 - 1.11.1 The provider institution's assessment regulations permit condonation and / or compensation.
 - 1.11.2 There are exceptional circumstances in the student's case that are likely to have impacted on the student's performance.
 - 1.11.3 The mark actually attained by the student in the subject to be condoned or compensated is not less than 35%.
 - 1.11.4 There is evidence of the student's academic strength across the entire degree programme.

Deemed passes

1.16 If a student who has been awarded a law degree was unable to take a foundation subject(s) because of exceptional circumstances that are likely to have impacted on the student's performance, and if the provider institution's assessment regulations permit it, the provider institution has the discretion to deem the student to have passed the subject (s), and to deem their degree a QLD.

1.17 Any such decision to deem a foundation subject as passed, and to deem the law degree as a QLD, must be based on exceptional circumstances, with confirmation that the provider institution's examination board, or other relevant body, has reviewed and confirmed the exceptional circumstances.

Failure in foundations of legal knowledge subjects

- 1.18 If a student has been awarded a law degree that is not a QLD due to the fact that no more than two foundations of legal knowledge subjects have been failed, or have not been studied, the student should normally be advised to attempt to take and pass the outstanding foundation subject assessment(s) at the provider institution that awarded the degree.
- 1.19 Such assessment(s) must be undertaken at the first available opportunity subsequent to graduation.
- 1.20 If this is not possible, the student will need to take and pass the relevant assessment(s) on a CPE course.

2 Common Professional Examination (CPE)

Overview

- 2.1 Students who wish to complete the academic stage of training by undertaking the CPE are required to pass the seven foundations of legal knowledge subjects and one other area of legal study.
- 2.2 A list of CPE courses that have been approved by the SRA and BSB is available from the SRA, and can be downloaded from its website.
- 2.3 Provider institutions have discretion in choosing the academic award name of the CPE as provided in their institution. The most common chosen award name is a Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL).

Eligibility

- 2.4 The CPE is an intense, condensed programme of study - specifically designed for graduates or students who have acquired career experience or academic / vocational qualifications that the SRA considers to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree.
- 2.5 Those wishing to undertake the CPE should contact one of the approved provider institutions directly. To be permitted to undertake the CPE, applicants must demonstrate to provider institutions one of the following.
 - 2.5.1 They hold a non-QLD law degree from a UK university / a university in the Republic of Ireland.
 - 2.5.2 They hold a degree in a subject other than law from a UK university / a university in the Republic of Ireland.
 - 2.5.3 They are overseas graduates who have studied any subject for a minimum of three years full time.
 - 2.5.4 They hold other academic or vocational qualifications that the SRA considers equivalent to a degree. Regulation 2.2 of the SRA Training Regulations 2014 allows us to recognise that the knowledge and skills outcomes (and the standard at which they must be acquired) may have been achieved by an individual through other assessed learning and supervised work-based learning. Where this is the case, we may grant exemption from some stage or part of the academic stage. We call this assessed learning and supervised work-based learning 'equivalent means'.

This provision of equivalent means includes the following:

Mature Students

They are mature students who can demonstrate that:

- § they have considerable experience (normally, at least 10 years), or have shown exceptional ability (normally, at middle-management level or above) in an academic, professional, business or administrative field;
- § they have achieved a sufficient standard of general education (usually, A-level passes sufficient to be granted admission to a full-time degree programme);
- § they have a good command of both spoken and written English.

Chartered Legal Executives

By undertaking the examinations of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) during a period of qualifying legal employment, it is possible to complete the academic stage of training and qualify as a solicitor without obtaining a degree.

Those interested in this route must contact CILEx for details.

Assistant Justices' Clerks

Assistant Justices' Clerks with a Diploma in Magisterial Law are normally eligible to undertake the CPE. They may claim partial exemption from the CPE if they have passed corresponding subjects in the Diploma in Magisterial Law - provided that the diploma has been awarded.

Those interested in this route must contact the Justices' Clerks' Society for details.

Degree-equivalent qualifications

Degree-equivalent qualifications could include, for example, qualifications obtained through the Institute of Chartered Accountants or the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Exemptions from subjects on the CPE

- 2.6 Full or partial exemption from the seven foundations of legal knowledge subjects, and from one further area of legal study, may be granted if a student has passed corresponding subjects within a degree programme.
- 2.7 If students wish to apply for partial exemption, they should apply directly to the provider when applying for the CPE course.
- 2.8 If students wish to apply for full exemption, they must do so directly to the SRA, before applying to provider institutions to enrol on their CPE course. For further information please refer to the information on Equivalent Means

Time-limits for completion of the CPE

- 2.9 A full-time CPE programme should normally be completed, with all assessments passed, in not less than one year and in not more than three years.
- 2.10 A part-time CPE programme should normally be completed, with all assessments passed, in not less than two years and in not more than four years.
- 2.11 If students have what they consider to be exceptional circumstances, preventing them from completing the CPE within the time limit, they should apply directly to their provider institution for an extension of time. Provider institutions should apply their own assessment policies and regulations in assessing such applications.

Credit Transfer

- 2.12 Students intending to transfer credit from one CPE provider to another should contact the SRA for further advice.

Maximum number of attempts

- 2.13 The maximum number of attempts permitted for each CPE subject is normally three.
- 2.14 If a student fails any subject three times, they are required to re-take a full CPE course in order to complete the academic stage of training. This may be re-taken at the same or a different provider institution.

No credit can be granted for subjects previously passed.

- 2.15 There is no limit to the number of attempts a student may make at the CPE.

However, on each occasion that a student undertakes a CPE course, all subjects must be studied and passed.

No credit can be granted for subjects previously passed.

Classification of awards and other matters

- 2.16 A student **must** be awarded a distinction where
- He/she has passed all elements of the assessments at the first attempt, without any subject being compensated, AND
 - He/she has obtained an overall average of at least 70%.
- 2.17 A student **may** be awarded a distinction where
- He/she has passed all elements of the assessments at the first attempt, without any subject being compensated; AND

- He/she has obtained an overall average of at least 70% in at least 50% of the subjects counting towards the final award; AND
 - He/She has obtained an overall average of at least 67%; AND
 - The examination board considers that it is not inappropriate to award a distinction.
- 2.18 A student must **not** otherwise be awarded a distinction.
- 2.19 A student **must** be awarded a **commendation** where
- He/she has passed all assessment at the first attempt, without any subject being compensated, AND
 - He/she has obtained an overall average of at least 60% in the assessments.
- 2.20 A student **may** be awarded a **commendation** where
- He/she has passed all elements of the assessment at the first attempt, without any subject being compensated, AND
 - He/she has obtained an overall average of at least 58% AND
 - He/she has obtained an overall average of at least 60% in at least 50% of the subjects counting towards the final award; AND
 - The examination board considers that it is not inappropriate to award a commendation.
- 2.21 A student must **not** otherwise be awarded a commendation.
- 2.22 A student **must** be awarded a pass where they have passed all assessments (at least 40% in each element of assessment), one element of which may have been compensated in accordance with the rules of the Board. A student must not otherwise be awarded a pass.
- 2.23 A student who fails an assessment and on re-sitting the assessment achieves a pass can only be awarded a **maximum** of 40% for the re-sit assessment.
- 2.24 An aegrotat pass is **not** permitted on the CPE.
- 2.25 Institutions may **not** require that students failing more than one assessment should be required to repeat not only that assessment (and any other assessment, which the student has failed), but also any additional assessments, which the student has successfully managed to complete. In other words, institutions may only require students to re-sit those assessments, which they have failed.



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