

SQE conference 2020 - questions and answers

Below we have published answers to factual questions that were asked at our SQE conference which took place on 15 December 2020.

May you shed some light on how foreign lawyer, with some years' experience, will get qualified to practise in England and Wales under the new system?

Regarding the SQE - as a qualified lawyer, you can transfer to become a solicitor of England and Wales, and you will be exempt from the work experience which we require of domestic candidates.

Under our [Principles for Qualified Lawyers](#), we can recognise qualified lawyers' professional qualifications and experience. The recognition may relate to SQE1 and/or SQE2 in totality, or the component assessments which make up:

- SQE1, which consists of two assessment components, and/or
- SQE2, which consists of one assessment component.

We will only recognise professional qualifications or experience as equivalent to a component of the SQE where the knowledge, skills and competences for which the lawyer seeks recognition correspond to the whole of an individual component – for example, the whole of SQE2.

We cannot recognise parts of a component (that is, some but not all of the questions in the assessment) because it is not possible to assess all candidates on a reliable and accurate basis if some candidates are only being assessed on some aspects of a component and not others.

Therefore, you may wish to look at the SQE assessment specification, which sets out the content of these components in detail and relate them your own professional and academic qualifications. This will indicate whether you may be eligible for any exemptions. The registration process, including requests for exemptions, will open in spring next year – look out for advance information on our [website](#).

Are candidates going to have access to past papers? The QLTS previous "confidential model" creates a lot of uncertainty, lack of transparency and results in the necessity to buy very costly courses offered by third parties that offers practise papers.

No, questions will be kept confidential. Sample questions are available on our website - [SQE1](#) and [SQE2](#). This was also answered during the SQE Conference session on [SQE implementation](#).

Will past years' exams be available for candidates (as the US State Bar) or are they going to be confidential (as with the QLTS)?

No, questions will be kept confidential. Sample questions are available on our website - [SQE1](#) and [SQE2](#). This was also answered during the SQE Conference session on [SQE implementation](#).

Will Kaplan publish "past papers"? Their refusal to do so on the QLTS has been a source of frustration for candidates.

No, questions will be kept confidential. Sample questions are available on our website - [SQE1](#) and [SQE2](#). This was also answered during the SQE Conference session on [SQE implementation](#).

Will there be preparation resources for SQEs for candidates that want to study independently?

There are training providers and legal publishers who are preparing to offer a wide variety of options from independent self-study materials, to online courses and face to face courses – here is our [list of providers](#). You can contact each provider to find out more.

What is the time-frame whilst undertaking the SQE1 (part one and part two)? Whilst the candidate is taking the SQE FLK assessment how long is the assessment for part-one and part-two? How many SBAs will need to be answered in this time-frame?

Detailed information can be found on our website, please visit [SQE polices and processes](#) page, we have all the information on timings and what to expect on the day and times.

Can you clarify is the QLD still available from September 2021?

As set out in our [common protocol](#), we will continue to validate qualifying law degrees (QLDs) courses for academic year 2021/22.

Does the SRA and Kaplan have a timeline available for the November 2021 SQE1 exam? At the moment, the SRA website only contains information on closing dates for registration. When does the SRA expect registrations to open, and when will be precise exam dates become available?

The planned dates for the exam sitting will be on the 8 and 11 November. You can find this information on our [website](#).

Zoe spoke about an assessment can take up to 6 hours per day, can this be clarified?

For more information please visit [SQE polices and processes](#) page, we have all the information on timings and what to expect on the day and times.

This is a question about timings: If a student is on an SQE course and plans to take SQE1 in Nov and SQE2 in April but is not successful in SQE1, what are their options for resits?

They cannot book onto SQE2 until they have received their results and passed SQE1.

Students who have completed LPC, can they follow the qualifying work experience to qualification?

If someone has the LPC but didn't have a period of recognised training (training contract), they can use qualifying work experience & passing SQE2 as an equivalent to a period of recognised training. This means they are admitted as a solicitor under the current route not the SQE. Find out more on our [transitional arrangements page](#).

What is the actual cost?

The total fee for taking both SQE assessments will be £3,980. When it is introduced in September 2021, these fees will cover:

- SQE1 - £1,558 for ten hours of examinations testing candidates' functioning legal knowledge.
- SQE2 - £2,422 for 14 hours of written and oral tasks testing both practical legal knowledge and skills, such as advocacy, legal research and case and matter analysis.

The fees do not include training costs, which will vary depending on a candidate's choices. Find out more about [SQE training providers](#).

Will there be any more sample questions published?

The SRA and Kaplan will not be publishing anymore sample questions other than those already available. Sample questions are available on our website - [SQE1](#) and [SQE2](#).

How can candidates access the preparatory resources without going through training providers?

There are training providers and legal publishers who are preparing to offer a wide variety of options from independent self-study materials, to online courses and face to face courses – here is our [list of providers](#). You can contact them to find out more.

Will there be exemptions from SQE1 for graduate members of CILEx or Fellows of CILEx?

From 1 September 2021 a Fellow of CILEx with practice rights in reserved and regulated activities qualified with full practice rights, will be eligible to become a solicitor, via the SQE, through our [principles for qualified lawyers](#).

Under our Principles for Qualified Lawyers we can recognise qualified lawyers' professional qualifications and experience. The recognition may relate to SQE1 and/or SQE2 in totality, or the component assessments which make up:

- SQE1, which consists of two assessment components, and/or
- SQE2, which consists of one assessment component.

We will only recognise professional qualifications or experience as equivalent to a component of the SQE where the knowledge, skills and competences for which the lawyer seeks recognition correspond to the whole of an individual component – for example, the whole of SQE2.

We cannot recognise parts of a component (that is, some but not all of the questions in the assessment) because it is not possible to assess all candidates on a reliable and accurate basis if some candidates are only being assessed on some aspects of a component and not others.

Therefore, you may wish to look at the SQE assessment specification, which sets out the content of these components in detail and relate them your own professional and academic qualifications. This will indicate whether you may be eligible for any exemptions.

The registration process, including requests for exemptions, will open in spring next year – look out for advance information on our [website](#).

Will our paralegals who hold an LPC be able to qualify through equivalent means or some form of QWE?

If paralegals have done an LPC but not had an offer of a period of recognised training and want to qualify under the current route, they can consider [Equivalent Means](#) if they have relevant work experience. This involves compiling a portfolio to demonstrate how their experience is equivalent to a period of recognised training and submitting it to us for assessment. The fee for this is £600.

Or

We will also accept experience equivalent to the new qualifying work experience as a period of recognised training, so long as they have successfully completed the SQE2 assessment as well. Find out more on our [transitional arrangements page](#).

If a student has completed LPC can they now do qwe instead of period of recognised training?

You have done an LPC but not had an offer of a period of recognised training

If you want to qualify under the current route, you could consider [Equivalent Means](#) if you have relevant work experience. This involves compiling a portfolio to demonstrate how your experience is equivalent to a period of recognised training and submitting it to us for assessment. The fee for this is £600.

Or

We will also accept experience equivalent to the new qualifying work experience as a period of recognised training, so long as you have successfully completed the SQE2 assessment as well. Find out more on our [transitional arrangements page](#).

What guidance is available to law firms on the QWE and how we sign off experience?

Guidance for employers is available on our [website](#).

How old can the QWE be? Would you say 35-40 hours per week is about right for 'full-time'?

Any experience gained at any time providing legal services that helps you develop some or all of the competencies required to practise as a solicitor can be counted as qualifying work experience.

Your qualifying work experience can be done in up to four separate organisations providing legal services. It can also be gained in different roles within the same organisation where each role gives you an opportunity to develop different competencies. We do not prescribe what full time (or equivalent) means. We expect employers or those signing off qualifying work experience to take a common-sense view of what this means.

For more guidance please visit our [website](#).

Can QWE be carried out at one organisation? Will there be no requirement to do different seats?

Any experience of providing legal services that helps you develop some or all of the competencies required to practise as a solicitor can be counted as qualifying work experience.

Your qualifying work experience can be done in up to four separate organisations providing legal services. It can also be gained in different roles within the same organisation where each role gives you an opportunity to develop different competencies. There is no requirement to do different seats

For more guidance please visit our [website](#).

Is there a cut off for when experience can be counted? For example, I did a placement in 2017 would that be counted?

There is no cut off, any experience of providing legal services that helps you develop some or all of the competencies required to practise as a solicitor can be counted as qualifying work experience. Find out more on our [website](#).

Must the qualifying work experience take place in the UK? must it be taken place in a law firm? Does working in the Legal Department in an international bank count?

QWE can be gained in any jurisdiction. The conditions for gaining QWE are set out in our [guidance](#), which may be useful for you.

Do you have to do your QWE before you take the SQE2 assessment or can you do it at any point - before, between or after the assessments?

Your QWE can be gained at any time, the conditions for gaining QWE are set out in our [guidance](#), which may be useful for you.

Would someone running a law clinic and is a solicitor but non practising - could they sign of QWE for a student

Yes, a practising or non-practising solicitor or compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) can sign off a candidates' qualifying work experience.

Find out more on our [website](#).

If someone did CPE in 2018 and they are working as paralegal this experience will count? or the valid experience is after getting SQE passed.

Yes, your experience as a paralegal can count towards QWE, so long as it:

- provides you with the opportunity to develop some or all of the competences in the [Statement of Solicitor Competence](#)
- can be signed off by a solicitor (inside or outside your organisation) with direct knowledge of your work. If it they work externally, there are additional requirements in [our rules](#) (see 2.2c).

Find out more on our [website](#).

If your organisation has a COLP, do they have to be the certifier or can it be another solicitor in the organisation?

No, QWE can be signed off by another solicitor. Find out more on our [website](#).

If qualifying work experience doesn't meet 'good quality' can it still be signed off by COLP?

The role of the solicitor or COLP is to confirm:

- details of the placement, such as where and when it took place

- whether it provided the opportunity to develop some or all of the specified competences
- that no issues arose that raise questions about character and suitability to be admitted as a solicitor, or if such confirmation cannot be given, then details of any issues that did arise.

The solicitor or COLP is not assessing a candidate's competence.

We expect solicitors and COLPs to comply with our Principles and Code of Conduct to act honestly, fairly at all times, to supervise effectively and not to abuse their position by taking unfair advantage of individuals. We may act against a solicitor or COLP if they refuse to confirm qualifying work experience (QWE) that meets our criteria or where they have breached our Principles and Code of Conduct in the way they have provided QWE.

Find out more on our [website](#)

I work for a Local Authority's legal services, my job title is a Legal Assistant. Although I do the same work as a paralegal. Would this constitute as qualifying work experience?

Any experience of providing legal services that helps a candidate to develop some or all of competences required to practise as a solicitor. This could include, for example, working in a law firm, as a paralegal, as a legal apprenticeship or part of a placement during a degree.

Find out more on our [website](#)

What is the minimum period (ie of days' work) for QWE?

QWE can be obtained in up to four separate organisations providing legal services. There is no minimum or maximum prescribed length for each individual placement.

Find out more on our [website](#)

The presentation mentioned that QWE needs to be signed off by a solicitor. Could you please clarify if this includes non-practising solicitors, as previously indicated?

A practising or non-practising solicitor or compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) can sign off a candidates' qualifying work experience.

Find out more on our [website](#).

Does the entire QWE needs to cover all of the areas of the SQE, or is it fine if the combination of all QWE only cover some of them?

The two years' qualifying work experience should have given you the opportunity to develop some or all of the competences needed to practise as a solicitor – see our guidance on [qualifying work experience](#).

Students don't have to be paid for it to count as QWE do they? So they don't have to be a paralegal necessarily?

No, QWE does not have to be paid so long as the experience:

- provides you with the opportunity to develop some or all of the competences in the [Statement of Solicitor Competence](#).
- can be signed off by a solicitor (inside or outside your organisation) with direct knowledge of your work. If it they work externally, there are additional requirements in [our rules](#) (see 2.2c)

The Sutton Trust have information on unpaid internships that you might find useful:

- [Internships Unpaid, unadvertised, unfair](#) and [Internships – Pay as you go?](#)

What is minimum qualification level to bank QWE? could someone who has a non-law degree and no SQE1 be banking experience now?

Any experience of providing legal services that helps you develop some or all of the competencies required to practise as a solicitor can be counted as qualifying work experience.

Your qualifying work experience can be done in up to four separate organisations providing legal services. It can also be gained in different roles within the same organisation where each role gives you an opportunity to develop different competencies. Find out more on our [website](#).

My understanding is that some candidates with learning support issues, in particular autism, can find MCQ's considerably more challenging. What, if anything, can be done to accommodate those particular candidates?

Information on how we will support candidates with disabilities or other conditions has been published in advance on our [website](#) ahead of the SQE website being available.

If Pearson have 140 locations in the UK, why are London, Manchester and Cardiff only being mentioned as SQE 2 locations? Will venues be available in all major cities to meet demand?

The SQE2 written assessments will be available at Pearson centres throughout the country. The SQE2 oral assessments will only be available at three locations initially - in London, Manchester and Cardiff. At least two additional venues will be added over time, based on demand.

Will providers be able to book candidate exams, or will individuals have to do this themselves?

We have published some information on the registration and booking process ahead of the SQE website being available. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

Will organisation contacts be able to manage accounts on the SQE portal?

No. The accounts will be owned and managed by the individual.

Does this mean that candidates will need to individually book SQE assessments, even if they are doing a preparatory course at a provider?

Individual candidate will need to register with the SQE and can either book the assessment themselves or the training provider can book the assessment on the candidate's behalf. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

Can I gain the qualify work experience outside of UK, for example Hong Kong? 2. If gaining qualify work experience is acceptable in Hong Kong or other countries, what is the criteria to be a recognised sign off provider for someone to provide sign off for me for my qualify work experience in Hong Kong?

The conditions for gaining QWE are set out in our [guidance](#), which may be useful for you.

What is the value of the LPC as a qualifying route from 1 September 2021, as some applicants had concern that the LPC will not be recognised by employers when the SQE is in place?

[Transitional arrangements](#) are in place for LPC students and you would be able to qualify under this route until 31 December 2032.

How can I obtain a copy of the slides and/or link to the Kaplan form?

Slides are available on our [event on demand page](#). You can find out more about Kaplan's recruitment on their [website](#).

Can I just ask if we still have a QLD as this is quite confusing as my understanding was that this would not be in place for the SRA due to SQE and we have found it really hard to know how to explain this in our marketing as we have potential barristers who need a QLD.

To qualify under the SQE there is no requirement for a QLD, but aspiring solicitors will need a degree (or equivalent). Please see our [website](#) for more information on what will be needed from 1 September 2021.

As set out in our [common protocol](#), we will continue to validate qualifying law degrees (QLDs) courses for academic year 2021/22, but not after.