

I want to be a solicitor

25 April 2019

This information is for people who want to be a solicitor. It will help you understand what the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) might mean for you.

- About the SQE [#3418]
- LPC or SQE? [#1161]
- Qualifying work experience [#7903]
- Q&A [#9817]

What is the SQE?

A single, national licensing examination that all prospective solicitors will take before qualifying. From autumn 2021, to qualify you will need to:

- have a degree in any subject (or equivalent qualification or work experience)
- pass both stages of the SQE assessment – SQE 1 focuses on legal knowledge and SQE 2 on practical legal skills
- have 2 years' qualifying work experience
- pass our character and suitability requirements.

The assessments

SQE 1 (Functioning Legal Knowledge and Practical Legal Skills Assessments)

You will be tested on:

- substantive and procedural law and cover core subjects currently taught on LLB and LPC courses
- application of fundamental legal principles
- legal research and writing skills.

SQE 2 (Practical Legal Skills Assessments)

You will be tested on:

- client interviewing
- advocacy
- case and matter analysis
- legal research and written advice
- legal drafting.

Timings

The SQE will be introduced in autumn 2021 and initially there will be two exam sittings per

year. The first sitting for SQE 1 is likely to be in November 2021.

You will only be able to take SQE 2 after passing SQE 1.

Sitting the SQE

The SQE will be available to sit in England and Wales, as well as some international locations (SQE 1 only).

SQE 1 includes three exams that are either multiple choice or written tests. You must sit all three together. This will be available to take across a wide geographic area at Pearson VUE centres.

For SQE 2, you will do role plays, as well as written work. There will be a more limited choice of centres for this assessment.

Cost / fees

Current estimates are that it will cost between £3,000 - £4,500 to sit the SQE. This breaks down as:

- SQE 1: £1,100 – £1,650
- SQE 2: £1,900 - £2,850

These are not finalised yet and the eventual fee may be inside or outside this range. This does not include any additional training you might need.

Resits

You will only be allowed three attempts at the assessment. These have to be taken within six years.

Already studying or got a law degree?

If you are already on your way to becoming a solicitor [\[sra/policy/sqe/transitional-arrangements/\]](#), you can choose to qualify through the existing routes (up until 2032) or through the SQE.

This includes anyone who has started, completed or accepted an offer for the Common Professional Examination, Qualifying Law Degree or a training contract by the time the SQE is introduced in autumn 2021.

If you are not getting a degree, you might be able to meet our equivalent qualification or work experience requirements [\[sra/policy/sqe/equivalent-qualification-work-experience-requirements/\]](#)

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SQE update 2019: Julie Brannan and Paul Carter

Should I do the LPC or wait for the SQE?

This could help you when deciding what qualification route is best for you.

Have you done the Legal Practice Course (LPC)?

Yes No

What is qualifying work experience?

All candidates will need to complete at least two-years full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience. This is the work experience part of qualifying as a solicitor after autumn 2021.

What counts?

Qualifying work experience is any experience of providing legal services that offers the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge needed practice as a solicitor [\[solicitors/resources/cpd/competence-statement/\]](#).

It can be gained in one block of time or in stages, so long as it is in no more than four organisations. It can be paid or unpaid work and could include time spent:

- on placement during a law degree
- on a vacation scheme
- in a student law clinic
- working for Citizen Advice
- working as a paralegal
- in a traditional two-year training contract.

Candidates can gain experience during or after they sit the SQE assessments. However, it must be completed by the time they apply for admission. They could even start gaining it now and 'banking' it for when SQE comes in autumn 2021.

Demonstrating work experience

Qualifying work experience must be signed off by one of the following:

- the compliance officer for legal practice (COLP) or a solicitor in a law firm
- a solicitor working in the organisation you work for
- another solicitor willing to sign off the experience, who has direct experience of the candidate's work.

The solicitor does not have to hold a practising certificate.

If you plan to use your current experience, you should start to think about how you will record it and who will sign it off.

For each placement, the following must be signed off:

- the details of the work experience carried out
- that it provided the opportunity to develop some or all of the prescribed competences for solicitors [\[solicitors/resources/cpd/competence-statement/\]](#)
- that no issues arose during the work experience that raise questions over the candidate's character and suitability to be admitted as a solicitor.

General - I want to be a solicitor

Open all [#]

What is the SQE?

The SQE is the Solicitors Qualifying Examination, which will be brought in no earlier than autumn 2021. More

In the future, all those wishing to qualify as a solicitor will need to pass the SQE, as well as holding a degree or equivalent qualification or experience, complete a two-year period of qualifying work experience and pass a suitability test.

SQE stage 1 primarily tests candidates' functioning legal knowledge. SQE stage 2 primarily tests practical legal skills.

Do you need a degree to sit SQE stages 1 and/or 2?

No. However, to be admitted as a solicitor, you will need a degree (in any subject) or equivalent in addition to passing the SQE. 'Equivalent' means a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree, such as: More

- a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship
- a level 6 or 7 professional qualification

If you don't have an equivalent qualification, we may be able to count experience in the workplace as equivalent.

How much will the SQE exam cost?

The provisional range for the total estimated cost of the two stages of assessment is between £3,000 - £4,500. More

SQE 1 will primarily test the application of legal knowledge. The fees range estimate is £1,100 - £1,650. SQE 2 will test practical legal skills. The fee range estimate is £1,900 - £2,850. The costs are based on an estimated 35 hours of assessment, including written tests, computer-based assessments and simulations such as mock client interviews. These costs are indicative, as we continue our work with Kaplan to develop and test the assessments.

The eventual fee may be inside or outside this range. Factors that could change the costs include the length and amount of assessment and whether it is offered in both English and Welsh.

How much will the SQE training cost?

If training is included as part of a degree, then there will be no additional charge. More

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

If you start, or make a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying Law Degree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting Law Degree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. More

I have a non-law degree. Can I still qualify under the old regulations?

If you start, or make a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying Law Degree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting Law Degree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. [More](#)

When will the SQE exams occur?

SQE assessments timings are not yet available. When we know what the final examinations will look like, then we will be able to offer more detailed information. [More](#)

Are there sample papers available?

Sample papers are not yet available. When we know what the final examinations will look like, then we will be able to offer more detailed information. [More](#)

How will the SQE assessment organisation be appointed?

Kaplan have been appointed as the assessment provider for the SQE. [More](#)

I have heard the way in which solicitors qualify is changing. Does that mean current solicitors are not competent?

We are making changes to make sure the way solicitors qualify in the future is consistent, but that does not mean solicitors who qualified under the old system are not competent. [More](#)

Currently, solicitors undertake extensive and thorough training before qualifying. When qualified, they must undertake a programme of continuing professional development to make sure that they are competent to perform their job roles and provide a proper standard of service to clients.

What data will the SRA be publishing about the SQE course providers?

We will publish data about the performance of all education and training providers. These will not be league tables. [More](#)

How can I get involved in the SRA's development of the SQE?

We would be delighted if you joined our LinkedIn group. You can use this group to discuss the developing ideas around the SQE and the new

routes to qualification. More

Later this year, we will also be consulting on the regulations that will underpin the introduction of the SQE and our approach to the admission of overseas lawyers and non-solicitor UK lawyers.

Thinking of becoming a solicitor in the future

Open all [#]

Are there any time restrictions as to how long a candidate should wait after taking SQE stage 1 to sitting SQE stage 2?

The SQE examination timetable may also affect the time taken between stage 1 and stage 2. The timetable is not yet published. We will introduce the SQE in autumn 2021. More

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

Depending on when you want to qualify as a solicitor, under the new regulations you will need to: More

- have a degree or equivalent qualification or equivalent experience
- undertake a two-year period of qualifying work experience
- pass the SQE
- pass a suitability test.

The target date for the new SQE will be no earlier than autumn 2021, so you can qualify under the new regulations from then.

The current route to qualification will also remain open until 31 December 2032 for any candidate who has started, or who has entered into a contractual agreement or made a non-refundable financial commitment to start, a Qualifying Law Degree, a Common Professional Examination/Graduate Diploma in Law, an Exempting Law Degree, an Integrated Course, the Legal Practice Course; or a period of recognised training.

I am in school, but want to become a solicitor. Is there a particular kind of work experience that will be needed to qualify in future?

Under the new regulations, you will need qualifying work experience which: More

- comprises experience of providing legal services that gives you the opportunity to develop the prescribed competences for solicitors
- is at least two years full time or equivalent
- has been undertaken in no more than four organisations
- has been confirmed by either the Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP) or a solicitor in the organisation or by another nominated solicitor. This confirmation must be obtained from each organisation.

I am undecided whether to become a solicitor or a barrister.

Will there be courses and qualifications like the current law degree, which will satisfy some of the requirements for both?

A law degree will still provide legal knowledge, but the content of each degree and how closely it is aligned to the content of the SQE assessments may vary. This may also be the case for the Bar Standards Board requirements. [More](#)

Although you will not need a law degree to qualify as a solicitor, you may wish to check whether your degree provider intend to incorporate SQE preparation as part of the curriculum.

Once the design of the SQE has been finalised, we expect that universities and training providers will signpost whether and how their courses will prepare candidates for the SQE.

Visit the Bar Standards Board website for more on the arrangements for barristers [<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/>].

I have not yet done any legal studies. I am not sure whether to start on an existing route to qualification, or to wait for the new route to qualification. Do you have a summary of current requirements, and of the new route to qualification, so that I can compare them?

Read information on the current routes to qualification. [More](#)

Read information on solicitor apprenticeships [[/students/resources/solicitor-apprenticeship-qa](#)].

Read information on the SQE and in the Resources accessible from that page. [[/home/hot-topics/solicitors-qualifying-examination](#)]

I am interested in taking the SQE as soon as it is introduced. Will there be preparatory courses? If there are, when will such courses start, and what are they likely to cost?

As the decision on the date on which the SQE will be introduced (autumn 2021) has only recently been announced, these courses have not yet been developed, so information on the length or likely costs of such courses is not yet available. [More](#)

I have a criminal record and want become a solicitor. How will the changes affect me?

We will check whether you are suitable to become a solicitor when you apply to us for admission after you have passed the SQE and undertaken qualifying work experience. You will be able to get guidance on whether you are likely to pass this process of checking your suitability before you start your training to become a solicitor. [More](#)

I do not want to do a degree. Will I be able to become a solicitor without one?

To be admitted as a solicitor, you will need a degree (in any subject) or equivalent, in addition to passing the SQE. 'Equivalent' means a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree, such as: [More](#)

- a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship
- a level 6 or 7 professional qualification

If you don't have an equivalent qualification, we may be able to count experience in the workplace as equivalent.

Period of Recognised Training (PRT)

Open all [#]

I am partway through my PRT. How will the changes affect me?

If you have started, or made a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying LawDegree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting LawDegree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. More

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

If you have started, or made a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying LawDegree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting LawDegree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. More

I have completed a QLD, CPE, GDL, LPC or Exempting Law Degree. If I wait to take the SQE when it is introduced, may I transition into the new route in a way that accredits the qualifications I have already done?

If you have started, or made a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying LawDegree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting LawDegree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. More

I hold a QLD, CPE, GDL and the LPC, or an Exempting Law Degree. I am now considering paralegal work instead of a training contract. Would paralegal experience count as qualifying work experience under the new regulations?

Qualifying work experience undertaken now could count towards admission under the new regulations, if it meets the following requirements: More

- it comprises experience of providing legal services that gives you the opportunity to develop the prescribed competences for solicitors.
- it is at least two years full-time or equivalent.
- it has been undertaken in no more than four organisations.
- it has been confirmed by either the Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP), a solicitor in the organisation or by another nominated solicitor. This confirmation must be obtained for each organisation.

Current law students

Open all [#]

I am already studying a QLD, CPE, GDL, LPC or an Exempting Law Degree. Do I have to sit the SQE?

If you have started, or made a contractual or irrevocable financial commitment to start, the Qualifying Law Degree, Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, Legal Practice Course, Exempting Law Degree or Period of Recognised Training when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032. More

My LPC course is closing, what should I do?

If you have started a QLD, CPE, GDL, LPC or Exempting Law Degree when the new regulations come into force, you will still be able to qualify under the old regulations for after the introduction of the SQE under our transitional arrangements, which will continue to permit admission by the current routes until 31 December 2032 More