

# Transitional arrangements and SQE Regulations

Updated August 2020

**For people qualifying through the SQE after 1 September 2021**

## *What are the transitional arrangements?*

Subject to approval by the Legal Services Board, the Solicitor Qualifying Examination (SQE) will be introduced on 1 September 2021. The first examinations - for SQE1 - will take place in November 2021.

Our transitional arrangements are designed to give candidates already on their way to becoming a solicitor when we introduce the SQE, as much choice as possible.

This means someone already studying or training can continue to qualify through the existing routes [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/\]](#), or choose to do the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#).

Our transitional arrangements apply to anyone who, before 1 September 2021, has completed, started, accepted an offer of a place or paid a non-refundable deposit for one of the following:

- a qualifying law degree (QLD)
- the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law (CPE)
- exempting law degree (ELD)
- the Legal Practice Course
- a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract).

In most cases, for the QLD, ELD and CPE, the relevant course must start at the latest on or before 31 December 2021.

Anyone who falls within this group will have until 31 December 2032 to qualify as a solicitor under the existing routes, as long as courses still remain available.

The text of the transitional arrangements are set out at regulation 11 [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/#reg-11\]](#) of the SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](#).

## *Qualifying law degrees and the Common Professional Examination/Graduate Diploma in Law*

We updated our common protocol [\[students/academic-stage/common-protocol/\]](#) in July 2020. This clarifies that we will continue to validate QLD, ELD and CPE courses that begin up to and including 31 December 2021, as long as the student has accepted the offer by 31 August 2021 (inclusive).

There are separate arrangements [\[#heading\\_a1a8\]](#) for students who deferred a place on a QLD, ELD or CPE from 2020 to 2021, and for those who accepted the offer of a period of recognised training on or before 31 August 2021.

## *Exempting law degree*

We will continue to validate ELD course that begin up to and including 31 December 2021, as long as the student has accepted the offer by 31 August 2021 (inclusive).

There are separate arrangements [\[#heading\\_a1a8\]](#) for students who deferred a place on an ELD from 2020 to 2021

### *Legal Practice Course*

Legal Practice Course (LPC) approvals will also be extended until at least the end of the academic year 2025/26. This is so any students who fall under the transitional arrangements, for example because they have started a QLD or CPE course, prior to the SQE's introduction - or have accepted an offer of a place (by the dates set out above) - can progress onto the LPC, as long as these courses are available.

### *How will the transitional arrangements affect me?*

Open all [\[#\]](#)

#### *Already have your qualifying law degree, exempting law degree or due to start in 2020 or 2021?*

If you have started, or accepted an offer to start, a qualifying law degree (QLD) or exempting law degree (ELD) on or before 31 August 2021, then you can qualify as a solicitor through the current route [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/\]](#) (as long as the courses remain available). This option remains open to you until 31 December 2032 or you can choose to do so through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#).

QLDs and ELDs remain available provided you accept the offer of a place by 31 August 2021 (inclusive) and the course starts on or before 31 December 2021.

There are separate arrangements for students who deferred a place on an QLD or ELD from 2020 to 2021, as set out below.

#### *Deferring students*

We realise that some students may delay starting new programmes of study, particularly given the current Covid-19 pandemic.

So you may start a QLD or ELD at any time in academic year 2021/22 up to 31 August 2022, where you originally accepted an offer to start in academic year 2020/21 and deferred your place. But you may not defer your place to a later academic year.

You will need to keep evidence of your deferral in order to be accepted onto a Legal Practice Course (LPC). This evidence could be, for example, a letter from your university making clear that you had accepted a place to start in 2020/21 and had deferred it to the subsequent academic year.

#### *Qualify through the current route*

Once you have a QLD or ELD, to qualify through the current route by 31 December 2032, you'll also need to:

- pass the LPC [\[students/lpc/\]](#)
- complete a period of recognised training [\[trainees/period-recognised-training/\]](#) (also known as a training contract)
- meet our character and suitability requirements [\[trainees/character-and-suitability/\]](#).

In most cases, anyone who starts a QLD or ELD after 31 December 2021 will not fall within the transitional arrangements. They will need to sit the SQE assessments and meet our other requirements [\[students/sqe/\]](#) to qualify as a solicitor.

There are, however, separate arrangements for students who deferred a place on a QLD or ELD from 2020 to 2021, and for those who accepted the offer of a training contract on or before 31 August 2021.

### *Qualifying through Equivalent Means (Exemptions)*

If you are in the transitional cohort, for example because you accepted an offer of a place on a QLD before 1 September 2021 and it began on or before 31 December 2021, you may be able to qualify under our Equivalent Means [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#) route. To do this you will need to have certificated learning and work-based experience equivalent to our training requirements.

### *Qualify through the SQE*

Alternatively, you could choose to qualify through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#), from 1 September 2021. You'll need to:

- have a degree (in any subject) or equivalent qualification or experience
- pass both stages of the SQE assessment [\[students/sqe/sqe-assessments/\]](#)
- have two years' full time equivalent qualifying work experience
- meet our character and suitability requirements.

### *Already have your Common Professional Examination (CPE) / Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) or due to start in 2020 – 2021?*

If you have started, or accepted an offer to start the CPE/GDL on or before 31 August 2021, then you can qualify as a solicitor current route [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/\]](#) (as long as the courses remain available). This option remains open to you until 31 December 2032 or you can choose to do so through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#).

CPE/GDLs remain available provided they start on or before 31 December 2021 and you accepted the offer to start the course up to and including 31 August 2021.

There are separate arrangements [\[students/sqe/\]](#) for students who deferred a place on a CPE or GDL from 2020 to 2021, and for those who accepted the offer of a period of recognised training on or before 31 August 2021.

### *Deferring CPE/GDL students*

We realise that some intending CPE/GDL students may delay starting new programmes of study, particularly given the current Covid-19 pandemic.

So you may start a CPE/GDL at any time in academic year 2021/22 up to 31 August 2022 (inclusive), where you had accepted an offer to start in academic year 2020/21 and deferred your place. But you may not defer your place to a later academic year.

You will need to keep evidence of your deferral in order to be accepted onto a Legal Practice Course. This evidence could be, for example, a letter from your university making clear that you had accepted a place to start in 2020/21 and had deferred it to the subsequent academic year.

It is possible that some non-law students may accept the offer of a period of recognised training before 1 September 2021, and before they have been offered a place on a CPE/GDL.

In this case you may start a CPE/GDL programme which starts up to and including 31 August 2022, and which meet our requirements for the CPE/GDL.

You will need to evidence your accepted offer in order to be accepted onto the CPE/GDL. For example, this could take the form of correspondence between you and your training provider accepting the offer of a period of recognised training.

### *Qualify through the current route*

Once you have the CPE, to qualify on the current route by 31 December 2032, you'll also need to:

- pass the Legal Practice Course [\[students/lpc\]](#)
- complete a period of recognised training [\[trainees/period-recognised-training/\]](#) (also known as a training contract)
- meet our character and suitability requirements [\[trainees/character-and-suitability/\]](#).

In most cases, anyone who starts the CPE/GDL after 31 December 2021 will not fall within the transitional arrangements. They will need to sit the SQE assessments and meet our other requirements [\[students/sqe/\]](#) to qualify as a solicitor.

There are separate arrangements for students who deferred a place on the CPE/GDL from 2020 to 2021, and for those who accepted the offer of a training contract on or before 31 August 2021. This is explained in the above section.

### *Qualifying through Equivalent Means (Exemptions)*

If you are in the transitional cohort, for example because you accepted an offer of a place on a CPE/GDL before 1 September 2021 and it began on or before 31 December 2021, you may be able to qualify under our Equivalent Means [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#) route, if you have certificated learning and work-based experience equivalent to our training requirements.

### *Qualify through the SQE*

You could also choose to qualify through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#) from 1 September 2021. You'll need to:

- have a degree (in any subject) or equivalent qualification or experience
- pass both stages of the SQE assessment [\[students/sqe/sqe-assessments/\]](#)
- have two years' full time equivalent qualifying work experience
- meet our character and suitability requirements.

### *Already have the Legal Practice Course (LPC) or are due to start?*

Our transitional arrangements may already apply to you because you have started or completed a qualifying law degree, the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law or an exempting law degree. . But you can also choose to qualify on the current route [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/\]](#) or take the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#), if you have started or completed the LPC, or if you have accepted an offer to start on the LPC, or paid a

non-refundable deposit, before 1 September 2021.

Once you have the LPC, to qualify on the current route by 31 December 2032, you'll also need to:

- complete a period of recognised training [\[trainees/period-recognised-training/\]](#) (also known as a training contract)
- meet our character and suitability requirements [\[trainees/character-and-suitability/\]](#)

### *Qualifying through Equivalent Means (Equivalent)*

If you started to train through the LPC before 1 September 2021, you may be able to qualify under our Equivalent Means [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#) route, if you have certificated learning and work-based experience equivalent to our training requirements.

### *Qualifying using qualifying work experience and the SQE2*

You could also ask us to recognise the combination of qualifying work experience [\[trainees/qualifying-work-experience/qualifying-work-experience-trainees/\]](#) and successfully passing SQE2 [\[students/sqe/sqe-assessments/\]](#) as equivalent to the period of recognised training. Please be aware that the first sitting of SQE2 will be April 2022.

### *Already have started or accepted an offer of a period of recognised training before 1 September 2021?*

If you have started, or accepted an offer to start, a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract) before 1 September 2021, then you can qualify as a solicitor through the current route [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/\]](#).

To qualify this way, by 31 December 2032, you'll also need to:

- pass a qualifying law degree (QLD) or Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law (CPE/GDL)
- pass the Legal Practice Course [\[students/lpc/\]](#)
- complete a period of recognised training (PRT) [\[trainees/period-recognised-training/\]](#)
- meet our character and suitability requirements [\[trainees/character-and-suitability/\]](#).

If you are unable to complete a PRT, you can choose to qualify through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#).

### *Period of recognised training offers for non-law students*

It is possible that some non-law students may accept the offer of a PRT before 1 September 2021, and before they have been offered a place on a CPE/GDL.

In this case you may start a CPE/GDL programme up until 31 August 2022, and which meet our requirements for the CPE/GDL.

You will need to keep the evidence of your accepted offer in order to be accepted onto the CPE. For example, this could take the form of the exchange of correspondence between you and your training provider, accepting the offer of a PRT.

### *Qualified foreign lawyers*

The SQE will replace the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS) once it is introduced on 1 September 2021. For more information, please visit our QLTS pages [\[solicitors/qlts/transition-sqe/\]](#).

## *Already a Chartered Legal Executive?*

If you are already a CILEx member, you can be admitted as a solicitor [\[trainees/admission/admission-criteria/#cilex\]](#) if you have all of the following:

- passed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- passed Professional Skills Course [\[trainees/professional-skills-course-providers/professional-skills-course-providers/\]](#) compulsory core subjects
- met our character and suitability requirements [\[trainees/character-and-suitability/\]](#) .
- provided a certificate of good standing from CILEx Regulation.

## *Qualify through the SQE*

You can choose to qualify as a solicitor under the current route (LPC/PRT) if by 1 September 2021 you have completed, started, accepted an offer to start or paid a non-refundable deposit for:

- a qualifying law degree
- the Common Professional Examination / Graduate Diploma in Law, the Legal Practice Course; or
- a period of recognised training (also known as a training contract).

See above for details about the dates by when you must start a qualifying law degree or Common Professional Examination

Or you can choose to qualify through the SQE [\[students/sqe/\]](#) . If you do, you'll need to:

- have a degree (in any subject) or equivalent qualification - CILEx Level 6 qualifications will count as equivalent to a degree for the purposes of the SQE
- pass both stages of the SQE assessment [\[students/sqe/sqe-assessments/\]](#) (SQE1 and SQE2)
- have two years' qualifying work experience – your CILEx work experience is likely to count
- meet our character and suitability requirements.

## *Fellow of CILEx with practice rights in reserved and regulated activities*

From 1 September 2021, if you are qualified as a CILEx with full practice rights, you will be eligible to become a solicitor, via the SQE, through our principles for qualified lawyers [\[sra/policy/sqe/principle-admission/\]](#) .

This means that you can apply for exemptions from the SQE. The extent of any exemptions will depend on your CILEx qualification and any additional experience or qualifications you may have. We will publish more information about exemptions for qualified lawyers in due course.

## *Effectively managing Legal Practice Course closure*

We will continue to authorise Legal Practice Courses (LPC) until the end of the 2025/26 academic year. However, we expect courses may close as demand for the LPC decreases. We want to make sure the standard of the LPC is maintained during the transition period for those who want to complete their route to qualification.

We have made authorising a course subject to a number of conditions to make sure that we

are aware if a course is closing. This is so that we know where students may be affected and can work with providers to make sure that the quality of provision is maintained.

### *Bar Standards Board changes*

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) have also made changes to their training requirements. We have entered into a common protocol [\[students/academic-stage/common-protocol/\]](#) with them to explain how this will affect qualifying law degree and the Common Professional Examination.

### *SQE Regulations*

The regulations [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](#) which bring into force the SQE have now been approved.

### *Admission principles for Qualified Lawyers*

If you are a qualified lawyer seeking admission under the SQE, please read our principles for admission [\[sra/policy/sqe/principle-admission/\]](#).