

# Student information pack

Updated 25 November 2019

During the coronavirus outbreak, we will be flexible about our teaching and assessment requirements.

Please visit our Q&As [\[sra/news/coronavirus-questions-answers/\]](#) to find out more.

If you are a student or candidate, please speak to your course provider.

Information for students, and others, wishing to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales

## *Status of this document*

This document sets out our requirements for individuals seeking to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales. It also contains non-mandatory guidance for people who want to become qualified as a solicitor of England and Wales. **Please note that in April 2017 the SRA Board approved the introduction of a Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) [\[sqe\]](#) which will fundamentally change the process of qualification as a solicitor.**

## *Overview of the regulatory framework*

We have a statutory duty to make sure that those who are admitted as solicitors have the knowledge and skills necessary for practice. We do this by specifying the education and training that an individual must complete. These requirements are set out in the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](#) and the Education, Training and Assessment Provider Regulations [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/\]](#).

## *Apprenticeships*

It is possible to qualify as a solicitor through by completing an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship will need to meet the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard for a solicitor (England) or the Level 7 Higher Apprenticeship in Legal Practice (Wales) including passing an assessment conducted by the SRA or approved by the SRA.

## *The regulations refer to two key stages to qualifying as a solicitor:*

- the academic stage
- the vocational stage

The academic stage is achieved by either a university degree in law or a university degree in a different subject and completing the Common Professional Examination (CPE) sometimes also referred to as the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL).

The vocational stage comprises

- the Legal Practice Course (LPC),
- a period of recognised training of two years (PRT), and
- the Professional Skills Course (PSC).

## *Overview of education and training requirements*

There are a number of ways that an individual can complete the academic stage of training but if you are studying or intend to study in a UK university, the usual routes to qualifying are by either first completing a qualifying law degree (QLD) at a UK university, or a degree in a different subject at a UK university and the Common Professional Examination (CPE), sometimes also called the Graduate Diploma in Law or GDL.

This is then followed by completion of the Legal Practice Course (LPC), a postgraduate professional qualification which prepares you for work-based learning; and finally by completing a period of recognised training and the Professional Skills Course.

To be admitted as a solicitor, you will also have to meet our requirements as to character and suitability.

### *The QLD route*

#### *QLD*

- this is the academic stage

#### *LPC*

- this is the first part of the vocational stage

#### *PRT and PSC*

- the final part of the vocational stage
- the PSC is normally completed during PRT

#### *Admission*

- education and training requirements met
- character and suitability assessed

### *The Common Professional Exam route*

#### *First degree*

- in any discipline from a UK University

#### *CPE/GDL*

- this completes the academic stage

#### *LPC*

- this is the first part of the vocational stage

#### *PRT and PSC*

- the final part of the vocational stage
- the PSC is normally completed during PRT

#### *Admission*

- education and training requirements met
- character and suitability assessed

## *The Academic Stage of Training*

A QLD is an undergraduate law degree that is recognised by the SRA for the purpose of permitting graduates to proceed to the vocational stage of training. There are specific requirements regarding the subjects that you must study and the number of assessment attempts that you are permitted. For example to be a qualifying law degree, the degree must include study of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge. There are also requirements relating to the amount of credits that must be allocated to the study of law on the degree and the number of assessment attempts a student is permitted.

The seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge are the key areas of law and principles which provide students with a sound body of knowledge from which to study other specialist areas of law and progress towards qualification as a solicitor. They are Contract, Tort, Criminal Law, Constitutional and Administrative Law, Property Law, Equity and Trusts, and the Law of the European Union.

Not all law degrees are QLDs, and you should ensure, if you wish to qualify as a solicitor, that the programme you undertake is a QLD. Your university will be able to give you details about the law degrees which they offer and whether they meet our requirements for QLD status.

Details about the QLD and its requirements can be found in Appendix 4 of the Academic Stage Handbook (PDF 46 pages, 415K) [[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3](#)] and an up-to-date register of QLDs [[students/courses/qualifying-law-degree-providers/](#)] is available.

### *Common Professional Examination/Graduate Diploma in Law*

This is sometimes referred to as the conversion course route and is for people who have an undergraduate degree, but not in law. It involves successful completion of the SRA's Common Professional Examination (CPE) or Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) provided by institutions that we approve. The CPE and the GDL are largely the same thing: the CPE is the professional qualification and the GDL is the academic award. In any event either will be treated as having met the academic stage requirements.

The CPE, is an intensive course built around the core curriculum and assessment requirements of a QLD. It is specifically designed for graduates from non-QLDs, whether or not in the UK, and for individuals who have acquired career experience or academic/vocational qualifications that the SRA considers to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree.

You may have graduated from a course that, while not a QLD, may have subjects which form a smaller part of the required curriculum in a QLD. In such a case, you may be eligible for credit for this prior study and therefore be exempt from having to be assessed in subjects you've already taken. This is called Accreditation of Prior Learning. If you think you may be eligible for credit you should formally apply to the CPE provider that you intend to study at. Under our Training Regulations 2011, all requests for exemption from some parts of the CPE had to be made directly to us. Under the Training Regulations 2014 and the current regulations, the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations, applications should be made directly to the CPE provider. Ideally this should be done when you are making your application to the course.

There are some cases where we may exempt you from all of the CPE because for example you are a Chartered Legal Executive. Where this is the case you should contact us for details of the relevant form to complete.

Further details about the CPE, including in particular assessment requirements, are in Appendix 4 of the Academic Stage Handbook (PDF 46 pages, 415K) [[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3](#)].

View an up-to-date register of CPE courses [\[students/courses/cpe-gdl-course-providers/\]](#).

### *CILEx route to qualification for fellows*

Chartered Legal Executives (CILEx) may also be exempt from part or parts of the academic and vocational stages.

Full details of the exemptions available can be found in the Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#).

### *Justice Clerks Assistants route to qualification*

Justices' Clerks' Assistants may be entitled to exemptions. Further details are contained in the Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#).

### *Degree equivalent qualification*

Another way to complete the academic stage is for those who have what the SRA considers to be qualifications equivalent to a first degree. These could include, for instance, qualifications obtained through the Institute of Chartered Accountants or the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. You can then undertake the CPE and go from there.

Details about the SRA's requirements can be found in Appendix 4 of the Academic Stage Handbook (PDF 46 pages, 415K) [\[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3\]](#).

### *Mature applicant route to qualification*

If you are a mature applicant but do not have a university degree, you may still be eligible to commence the CPE. There is more detail about this in the Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#).

### *Qualification route for lawyers from another jurisdiction*

If you are a lawyer qualified in a jurisdiction other than England and Wales, or you are a qualified Barrister in England and Wales, and you wish to be admitted as a Solicitor in England and Wales, you may be eligible to sit assessments under The Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme [\[qlts/\]](#).

Before you decide to apply, check details of the scheme [\[solicitors/qlts/\]](#), including the list of recognised jurisdictions [\[solicitors/qlts/recognised-jurisdictions/\]](#). If your jurisdiction is not on the list, you should contact your home bar or law society to ask if it has applied to the SRA for recognition. Your home bar or law society can contact us directly to apply for recognition by emailing our QLTS Survey Team [\[home/contact-us/\]](#).

### *Morgenbesser*

We can also assess EU nationals who seek to qualify under the principle established in *Case C-313/01 Morgenbesser v Consiglio dell'Ordine degli avvocati di Genova* (13 November 2003). Under this principle an EU, EEA or Swiss national who is partially qualified in another EU/EEA Member State may apply to us to recognise the knowledge and skills they have acquired in achieving partial qualification and we will assess what further education and training they must do to meet our education and training requirements for qualification as a solicitor. See the Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#) for further details.

## *The Vocational Stage of Training*

To complete the vocational stage of training you will be required to complete the LPC, a period of recognised training, and the Professional Skills Course (the PSC).

### *Legal Practice Course*

The LPC is a professional postgraduate course which aims to prepare you for the work-based learning you will do in training and also as a general preparation for the work you will do as a solicitor. It can be studied full time or part time, with an authorised LPC provider [\[students/courses/lpc-course-providers/\]](#).

The course is made up of two stages. Stage 1 is made up of the core practice areas of Litigation, Property and Business, legal skills, such as advocacy and legal drafting. This is also where you will learn about the rules of professional conduct and solicitors accounts. Stage 2 is made up of vocational electives, such as Employment Law, Family Law, Commercial Property Law. The vocational electives focus on specialist areas of law and practice.

Completion of the LPC means that you have been assessed in and demonstrated that you have successfully met the Outcomes [\[students/lpc/\]](#) for the course.

### *Exemptions*

Exemptions from certain elements of the LPC are permitted to graduates of the Bar Vocational Course (BVC) and Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) under the SRA's accreditation of prior learning policy.

Graduates of either the Bar Vocational Course (BVC) or the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) are permitted exemptions from attendance and assessment in some areas of the LPC. BVC graduates are exempt from the following areas:

- Stage 1 – Litigation, advocacy, drafting, practical legal research
- Stage 2 – Two vocational electives.

BPTC graduates are exempt from the following areas:

- Stage 1 – Litigation, advocacy, drafting
- Stage 2 – Two vocational electives

The credit may only be awarded where the student has completed the BVC or BPTC no earlier than five years prior to the date of his or her enrolment on the LPC course.

### *Other types of programmes*

There are some programmes that combine the academic stage with the vocational stage, these are called Exempting Law Degrees. These programmes are typically four years in length, and upon completion, a student can commence their period of recognised training. Find details of those providers who offer an Exempting Law degree [\[students/academic-stage/exempting-law-degrees/\]](#).

### *Period of recognised training*

Training can take place after the LPC or whilst you are completing the LPC. Training is structured, supervised work-based learning, and is usually for a period of two years. As a trainee you will be required to meet the Practice Skills Standards [\[trainees/professional-skills-course-providers/psc-written-standards/\]](#). You will also be required to complete the Professional Skills

Course (PSC); we recommend that you do this during the period of recognised training.

The Practice Skills Standards are set out in the information packs for authorised training providers [\[trainees/resources/authorised-training-provider-information-pack/\]](#) and the one for trainees. They describe the skills that you should acquire during your training and also the type of activities that you should be doing in order to develop the skills of a solicitor.

## *Professional Skills Course*

The Professional Skills Course [\[trainees/resources/professional-skills-course-information-pack/\]](#) is studied during your training. It builds upon the knowledge and skills you have acquired during your study on the LPC. The course is made up of three compulsory areas and electives. It can be taken during your training and you must pass all elements of the course. View details of the authorised PSC providers [\[trainees/professional-skills-course-providers/professional-skills-course-providers/\]](#)

## *Character and Suitability*

The route to qualification as a solicitor in England and Wales also requires successfully meeting the requirements expressed in our Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/\]](#).

We are responsible for setting and maintaining standards for all solicitors practising in England and Wales. We therefore have a duty to consider the character and suitability of anyone who wishes to enter the profession. We must make sure that any individual admitted as a solicitor has, and maintains, the level of honesty, integrity and professionalism expected by the public and other stakeholders and professionals, and does not pose a risk to the public or the profession.

We assess the character and suitability of all applicants when they apply for admission against the criteria set out in the Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules.

Every case is considered on its merits. We will ask for written confirmation of the relevant issues, and individuals may be asked to appear before a Solicitors Regulation Authority adjudicator to explain their situation.

You may also seek an early assessment if there is a risk that you may not later qualify for admission on the grounds of an issue of character and suitability.

To have your character and suitability assessed early you need to complete the application for Character and Suitability assessment form (PDF 10 pages, 265KB) [\[\[globalassets/documents/trainees/character-suitability-application.pdf?version=495d11\]](#). You will need to complete the screening process [\[trainees/admission/dbs-check/\]](#) before submitting your application.

Failure to disclose convictions and other issues is a serious matter. This may result in refusal of admission as a solicitor in England and Wales.

## *Contact information*

For general information about qualifying as a solicitor please visit the following links:

- Admission as a solicitor [\[sra/decision-making/guidance/admission-solicitor/\]](#)
- Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#)
- Solicitors Qualifying Examination [\[sra/policy/sqe/\]](#)

For general information or advice on qualifying as a solicitor, please contact us [\[home/contact-](#)

us/].