

# Qualifying work experience for candidates

Updated 5 April 2022

All candidates looking to qualify through the SQE route [\[/become-solicitor/sqe/\]](#) will need to complete two years' full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience (QWE).

QWE helps aspiring solicitors by giving them experience of real life legal work and the opportunity to develop some or all of the competences needed to be a solicitor

Aspiring solicitors with the Legal Practice Course can also use QWE, and passing SQE2, as an equivalent to a period of recognised training [\[/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/substitute-qwe-sqe2-equivalent-training/\]](#) (often known as a training contract). Find out how to choose this option. [\[/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/substitute-qwe-sqe2-equivalent-training/\]](#)

Qualifying work experience does not apply to qualified lawyer. Find out how they can become a solicitor [\[/become-solicitor/qualified-lawyers/\]](#) .

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## *What counts as QWE?*

QWE must involve providing legal services. The Legal Services Act 2007 (s. 12) [\[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/section/12\]](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/section/12) defines legal activity and can help candidates decide whether their role involves delivering legal services. Because some or all of our competencies [\[/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/\]](#) are likely to be part of delivering legal services, any work that meets this definition is likely to be QWE.

If someone works in a law firm, in-house legal team or other legal services provider in a role that doesn't meet this definition, it's unlikely to be QWE. Simulated legal services also do not count – it must be real life experience.

Candidates can gain QWE before, during or after they sit the SQE assessments. You can also use experience from previous roles.

QWE is designed to be flexible so that it can take place in a wide range of organisations providing legal services. It can be gained in up to four organisations, in paid or volunteer work, and could include time spent:

- on placement during a law degree
- working in a law clinic
- at a voluntary or charitable organisation or a law centre
- working as a paralegal
- on a training contract.

QWE can be gained in England or Wales or overseas, and it does not need to cover English and Welsh law. A candidate will need knowledge of this to take the SQE assessment, but they do not need to gain this specifically through their work experience.

We will not advise as to whether an individual's situation is QWE. You can use these questions to work out if your current or previous job, role or experience can count as QWE. If you answer 'yes' to all of them, it is likely to be QWE.

- Does or did your job, role or experience involve providing legal services? The Legal Services Act 2007 (s. 12) defines legal activity.
- Does or did your job, role or experience involve real life legal services provision rather than simulated legal services provision?
- Have you been exposed to at least two competences in the Statement of Solicitor Competence?
- Has or will your job, role or experience be carried out in no more than four organisations?
- Has or will your job, role or experience be at least two years' full time or equivalent? We will not prescribe what full time (or equivalent) means.
- Has or will your job, role or experience be confirmed by a solicitor or Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP)?

We will not prescribe what full time (or equivalent) means. We expect QWE providers/employers to take a common-sense view of what they mean by full time.

Find out more on how to get the best out of your qualifying work experience [[become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/best-qualifying-work-experience/](#)].

### *How many competences does someone need?*

In order to make the most of QWE, it is better for candidates to have the opportunity to develop a wide range of competencies. Candidates will be assessed on whether they can demonstrate the full range of competences through the SQE assessment. They must pass this to be admitted as a solicitor.

Our regulations do not require someone to develop all of the competencies [[solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/](#)] for their experience to count as QWE. The minimum number needed is two. We also do not prescribe which competencies an individual should be exposed to.

A role that involves only a single competence, even though it may be providing legal services, will not count as QWE.

### *Demonstrating and confirming work experience*

We have a useful template [[become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/](#)] that candidates can use to record their experience and how it meets our competencies. It is not a regulatory requirement to use our template - it is a training and recording aid only.

QWE must be confirmed by a solicitor of England and Wales or Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP), but they do not have to hold a practising certificate.

It can also be a solicitor that does not work for same organisation as the candidate but is willing to confirm. They will need to have:

- reviewed their work during the relevant period of work experience
- received feedback from the person or persons supervising their work.

It cannot be a barrister of England and Wales unless they are also a solicitor or COLP we regulate. It also cannot be a different type of qualified lawyer, again unless they are also a solicitor.

This is what is being confirmed:

- the length of work experience that was carried out
- that the work experience was providing legal services and the candidate had the opportunity to develop some or all of the competences for solicitors [[solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/](#)] (minimum of two)
- that no issues arose during the work experience that raise questions over the candidate's character and suitability to be admitted as a solicitor.

Confirming QWE does not involve deciding whether an individual is competent and suitable to practise. Competence is determined by passing the SQE assessments rather than by a confirming solicitor at the end of a period of QWE. We assess a candidate's suitability to be a solicitor when they apply for admission. Therefore, experience should be confirmed if it meets our criteria.

Similarly, confirming QWE does not involve judging how well a candidate has been trained, the quality of their experience or the standard of their work. However, the solicitor can state what evidence they need to see in order to confirm the period of QWE.

### *Using past experience*

QWE can be claimed retrospectively for a past job, placement or volunteer role. There is no limit on how far back someone can claim it so long as it counts as QWE. A candidate would need to speak to their previous employer to discuss who could potentially confirm this experience in their organisation.

We expect solicitors and COLPs to take reasonable and appropriate steps to confirm any back dated requests. However, there may be circumstances when they may not be able to confirm your experience such as no records are available.

### *Registering QWE*

Candidates only need to register their two years' QWE by the time they apply for admission as a solicitor. Find out how to record completed QWE [[/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/registering-qualifying-work-experience/](#)].

### *Infographic - Qualifying work experience*