

Academic stage of education and training

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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.

SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations

The SRA has 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 our rules Authorisation of Individuals Regulations [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](#), which govern all aspects of qualifying as a solicitor.

Our rules are supported by:

- Academic Stage Handbook (PDF 44 pages, 422KB) [\[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3\]](#)
- Student Information Pack [\[students/resources/student-information/\]](#)
- Equivalent Means guidance [\[students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#)

Our regulations refer to two key stages to qualifying as a solicitor:

- the academic stage [\[students/academic-stage/\]](#)
- the vocational stage [\[solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](#)

Academic stage of education and training

There are a number of ways you can complete the academic stage of education and training. However, if you are studying, or intend to, in a UK university, the usual routes to qualifying are:

- by either first completing an undergraduate qualifying law degree (QLD) at a UK university
- or a degree in a different subject at a UK university followed by the Common Professional Examination (CPE), sometimes called the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL)
- then completing the Legal Practice Course [\[students/lpc/\]](#) (LPC), a postgraduate professional qualification which prepares you for work-based learning, and finally by completing a period of recognised training.

There are also exempting law degrees (ELDs), which combine the academic stage of education and training with the LPC.

Trainees no longer have to disclose character and suitability issues before they start training. But all suitability issues must be disclosed at admission. Read more on the period of recognised training (2019 regulations) [\[trainees/period-recognised-training/period-recognised-training-2019/\]](#)

Academic Stage Handbook

The Academic Stage Handbook (PDF 44 pages, 422K) [[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3](#)] sets out the basic rules and guidance for those with an interest in providing or undertaking QLDs, ELDs and the CPE.

Academic awards

Higher Education Providers have discretion in their choice of academic award title for QLDs, ELDs and the CPE, and so the actual award titles will vary from provider to provider.

It is the responsibility of prospective students who wish to become solicitors and barristers in England and Wales to make sure that they enroll on a programme that has been validated for this purpose.

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, the number of assessment attempts that you are permitted, and also requirements relating to the amount of credits that must be allocated to the study of law on the degree.

Not all law degrees are QLDs, and you should make sure, 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.

Find out more about the QLD and its requirement (PDF 44 pages, 158 KB)

[[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3](#)], and take a look at our register of approved QLDs [[students/courses/qualifying-law-degree-providers/](#)].

The CPE course route is for people who have an undergraduate degree but not in law. It involves successfully completing the CPE / GDL, provided by institutions that we accredit. It is sometimes referred to as a conversion course. If you want to take the CPE, you need to provide evidence to the institution at which you wish to study demonstrating that you meet the minimum requirements for admission to the course.

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

You may have graduated from a course that, while not a QLD, may have subjects which form a 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 have 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 where you intend to study.

There are some cases where we may exempt you from all of the CPE because, for example, you are a Chartered Legal Executive. See Equivalent Means below.

Find out more about the CPE and its requirements (PDF 44 pages, 422K)

[[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3](#)], and take a look at our CPE providers [[students/courses/cpe-gdl-course-providers/](#)].

An ELD is a law degree that is recognised by the SRA for the purpose of permitting graduates to proceed to a period of recognised training, by combining the academic stage of education and training with the LPC. A provider seeking validation of an ELD will need to

demonstrate that the design of the course will meet both the outcomes of the Joint Statement and the learning outcomes for the LPC.

Find out more about the CPE and its requirements (PDF 44 pages, 422K)

[\[/globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf?version=4a1ac3\]](#) ,

and take a look at our register of approved ELDs [\[/students/academic-stage/exempting-law-degrees/\]](#) .

Equivalent Means

Regulation 2.2 of the Training Regulations 2014 allows us to recognise that the knowledge and skills outcomes (and the standard at which they must be acquired) may have been achieved by an individual through other assessed learning and work based learning. Where this is the case, we may grant exemption from all or part of the academic stage.

We refer to this assessed learning and work-based experiential learning 'equivalent Means'. It can apply to Chartered Legal Executives, graduates of CILEx, Justices' Clerks' Assistants, EU, EEA or Swiss nationals who are partially qualified in another EU/EEA country, and those whom the SRA may consider to be mature applicants.

Find out more about Equivalent Means [\[/students/resources/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](#) .

Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS)

Those who are qualified lawyers in a different jurisdiction (i.e. outside England and Wales), or who are Barristers qualified in England and Wales, are not covered by the Equivalent Means provision. They must seek admission through the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme Regulations [\[/solicitors/qlts/\]](#) .

The QLTS ensures that such applicants have met the standard of knowledge and skill required of a newly qualified solicitor of England and Wales. This is done through two separate tests which are administered on the SRA's behalf by Kaplan QLTS.

More about the QLTS [\[/qlts\]](#)

Joint regulation of the academic stage of education and training

The SRA and the Bar Standards Board plan to make changes to their Training Regulations. These changes will have an impact on QLD and CPE courses as part of the academic stage of training. We have agreed a Common Protocol to explain the impact of the proposed changes on these courses.

Common Protocol on the Academic Stage of training [\[/students/academic-stage/common-protocol/\]](#)

The SRA and the Bar Standards Board are jointly responsible for accrediting providers and for validating programmes for those who wish to become solicitors and barristers in England and Wales. The SRA acts as the administrator on behalf of both regulators.

Academic stage information from the BSB [\[https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/\]](https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/)

The fundamental point of reference for this joint validation process is the 1999 Joint Statement of the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar on the completion of the academic stage of training.

Read the Joint Statement [\[/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-joint-statement-bsb-law-society/\]](#)

In order to have programmes validated and revalidated, Higher Education providers are required to self-certify, complete with supporting documentation, their compliance with the Joint Statement and with QAA standards and quality assurance requirements.

Download the Self-Declaration Form [[globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/qld-cpe-provider-self-declaration-form.docx?version=4a1ac1](#)]