

News release

Green light for new solicitor exam

28 October 2020

We have welcomed the Legal Services Board's (LSB) decision [<https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20201027-Decision-Notice-SQE.pdf>] to approve in full the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE).

The SQE will be introduced from 1 September 2021 so that the public and employers can have confidence that qualifying solicitors have all met the same, high standard.

The LSB's decision follows a nine-year process of consultation on solicitors' training. In the last 18 months we have worked with our assessment provider Kaplan to refine the detail of the assessments through piloting, engagement, expert input and independent review. This has involved 26,000 interactions with interested parties, including around 200 meetings, events and webinars with a wide range of stakeholders.

Our focus is now on preparing to run the first assessments, working closely with Kaplan and all stakeholders. The first sittings for SQE1 will take place in November 2021 with the first SQE2 sittings in April 2022.

In the coming weeks, we will publish more resources, including further information on assessment logistics, guidance on qualifying work experience and sample questions for SQE2. We will also publish a timeline of what information will be made available to help everyone understand the new assessments.

We will be running a day-long SQE virtual conference, targeted at training providers, on 15 December, and an SQE session for law firms at our compliance conference. Building on the success of our Facebook presence [<https://www.facebook.com/careerinlaw/videos/2809405335831067>], we have also launched Career in Law on Instagram to help aspiring solicitors understand what the SQE means for them.

Anna Bradley, Chair of the SRA, said: "We welcome the LSB's decision. The SQE will provide assurance that all aspiring solicitors meet consistent, high standards at point of entry to the profession. It will also open up new and diverse routes to qualification.

"Our application and the decision notice itself show just how much work over very many years has gone into making sure the SQE is a world class, rigorous assessment."

Those who qualify under the SQE will need to:

- have a degree in any subject (or equivalent qualification or experience)
- meet our character and suitability requirements
- gain two years' qualifying work experience
- pass two stages of SQE assessment: SQE1 will test candidates' functioning legal knowledge of the law of England and Wales, while SQE2 will test a combination of practical legal skills and knowledge.

The SQE transitional period [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/>] will enable people who have begun the process of qualifying under the current Legal Practice Course training route to finish under that route, or choose to take the SQE.