

# Trailblazer solicitor apprenticeship

## Questions and answers

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### Q1. What is the Trailblazer Solicitor Apprenticeship?

The Trailblazer apprenticeship leading to qualification as a solicitor is a new legal apprenticeship, approved by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in autumn 2015. More

It is called a Trailblazer1 [#n1] apprenticeship because it was developed by an employer panel2 [#n2] as part of a government programme to reform and improve apprenticeships.

You can find out more about the solicitor apprenticeship on the GOV.UK website:

- Apprenticeship standard leading to qualification as a solicitor  
[<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standard-solicitor>]

The solicitor apprenticeship is a level 7 apprenticeship which will normally take 5 to 6 years to complete.

We updated our Regulations [[/solicitors/handbook/trainingregs2014/content](#)] in November 2015 to enable admission as a solicitor through an apprenticeship route. There is no time-limit between completing the apprenticeship and applying for admission as a solicitor.

For each apprenticeship, there is an apprenticeship standard, which describes the skill, knowledge, and behaviours required to qualify as a solicitor and an assessment plan which sets defines how the apprentice will be assessed during and at the end of their apprenticeship.

The solicitor apprenticeship standard is based on the Statement of Solicitor Competence [[/solicitors/competence-statement](#)] and to complete the apprenticeship, an apprentice must pass a two-stage examination, the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) [[/sqe](#)], set by the SRA, the second part of which must be completed during the last six months of the apprenticeship.

The SRA does not have oversight of employers or training providers for the apprenticeship. If an apprentice solicitor is unhappy with any aspect of their apprenticeship, they should raise this with their employer and training provider, following the agreed complaints procedure. If after this, the apprentice does not feel that their complaint is being addressed, they should contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency [<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-support-essential-guide#who-can-i-complain-to-if-i-am-unhappy-with-any-aspect-of-my-apprenticeship>].

### Q2. Is there a solicitor apprenticeship in Wales?

Employment skills and apprenticeship policy is a devolved matter and the Welsh government has not adopted the Trailblazer approach. More

However, a Level 7 Higher Apprenticeship framework leading to qualification as a solicitor [<https://acwcerts.co.uk/web/>] was approved by the Welsh government in March 2015.

### Q3. Can employers start recruiting apprentice solicitors now?

Yes, employers can start recruiting apprentice solicitors now. More

You can find out more about employing an apprentice in England on the GOV.UK website [<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>].

There is a minimum apprenticeship salary [<http://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>] but employers can exceed this.

Employers can also set their own entry requirements although the entry requirements are recommended in the apprenticeship standard [<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standard-solicitor>].

The GOV.UK [<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards#law-standards>] website also explains what level of government funding is available for each apprenticeship.

***Q4. Do apprentices need to register with the SRA in the way that trainee solicitors currently need to notify the SRA of the commencement of their period of recognised training?***

No, apprentices do not need to be registered with the SRA or notify us that they have started their apprenticeship. Apprentices will only register with the SRA when they are ready to apply for admission as a solicitor. More

Apprentices will need to register with the assessment organisation, appointed by the SRA to deliver the Solicitors Qualifying Examinations (SQE). The SQE will not be available before autumn 2021 and details on how to register will be published at least six months before the first examination session.

However, training providers in England must register all apprentice solicitors at the start of their apprenticeship with the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Also, as with all intending solicitors, apprentices will have to satisfy us as to their character and suitability when they apply to the SRA be admitted as a solicitor.

Apprentices do not have to disclose to the SRA any character and suitability issues which arise before they start or during their apprenticeship. Employers are expected to take account of these issues as part of their recruitment or appraisal procedures.

Please make sure you read our character and suitability requirements [</solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>]. These are critical to you becoming a solicitor and one that you must consider throughout your professional career. You can also seek an early assessment if there is a risk that you may not later qualify for admission because of an issue of character and suitability.

To have this 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/screening/>] before submitting your application.

***Q5. Do employers or firms recruiting apprentices need to be registered with or authorised by the SRA in the way that employers or firms currently have to do if they were offering a training contract or period of recognised training?***

No, employers or firms do not need to be authorised by or registered with the SRA to recruit

apprentices.

***Q6. Do universities or training providers need SRA validation or authorisation to run the solicitor apprenticeship, the way they currently need LPC validation or QLD authorisation from the SRA?***

No, the SRA does not authorise or validate universities or training providers for the solicitor apprenticeship. [More](#)

In England, the authorisation of apprenticeship training providers is undertaken by Department of Education, through the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who admit training providers to their Register of Training Organisations [<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>].

***Q7. Does the SRA have any specific requirements for the training apprentices receive in the workplace over and above that which is set out in the Trailblazer solicitor apprenticeship standard?***

No, the SRA does not specify the training for an apprentice solicitor. [More](#)

The solicitor apprenticeship standard and associated assessment plan specify the outcomes for the apprenticeship training programmes. We are responsible for ensuring standards at the point of qualification through the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). [Learn more about what the SQE will assess](#) [</sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/>].

***Q8. What will the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) mean for the Trailblazer apprenticeship leading to qualification as a solicitor?***

Our Board decided in April 2017 to proceed with the development and introduction of the SQE, with a target launch date of autumn 2021. [More](#)

1. The SQE will therefore be the centralised and end-point assessment in the solicitor apprenticeship.
2. To qualify as a solicitor in the future, a candidate must:
  1. Pass both stages of the SQE
  2. Have a degree or equivalent
  3. Have a substantial period of work experience providing legal services (qualifying work experience)
  4. Satisfy our character and suitability requirements.
3. We consulted on new admission regulations [</sra/consultations/consultation-listing/new-regulations/>] to implement these requirements in summer 2017.
4. Anyone who has started, or is about to start, a Trailblazer apprenticeship leading to qualification as a solicitor will be able to meet these requirements, as shown below.

Requirement	Solicitor apprenticeship
Pass stage 1 and stage 2 of the SQE which	The apprenticeship standard is the same

<p>assess the prescribed competences for solicitors described in the Statement of Solicitor Competence.</p>	<p>as the Statement of Solicitor Competence.</p> <p>Stage 1 of the SQE will form part of the on-programme assessment in the apprenticeship.</p> <p>Stage 2 of the SQE will be the end-point assessment which must be taken in the last six months of the apprenticeship.</p>
<p>Have a degree</p> <p>Or, have a qualification (including an apprenticeship) or experience which we recognise as equivalent to a degree.</p> <p>This does not have to be in law or the provision of legal services.</p>	<p>An apprentice who has successfully completed the solicitor apprenticeship, which is a level 7 qualification, will have met this requirement.</p>
<p>Have at least two years full time (or equivalent) experience of providing legal services, in no more than four different organisations.</p> <p>The experience must provide the opportunity to develop the prescribed competences for solicitors described in the Statement of Solicitor Competence.</p> <p>The candidate must keep a training record.</p> <p>The experience must be confirmed by either:</p> <p>a Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP), or</p> <p>a solicitor working within the organisation, or</p> <p>if the organisation has no nominated solicitor, another solicitor can confirm that the qualifying work experience has taken place.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the solicitor apprenticeship lasts five to six years.</p> <p>The apprentice and training provider must keep a record of training which develops the competences set out in the Apprenticeship standard and Statement of Solicitor Competence.</p> <p>To meet our requirements for admission, the completion of the apprenticeship must be confirmed by a COLP or a solicitor working within the organisation, or another nominated solicitor.</p>
<p>Satisfy our character and suitability requirements.</p> <p>Anyone wishing to be admitted as a solicitor must satisfy us that they have the honesty, integrity and the professionalism expected by the public and other stakeholders and professionals, and do not pose a risk to the public or the profession.</p>	<p>An apprentice who has successfully completed their solicitor apprenticeship will be required to demonstrate that they meet our character and suitability requirements at the point they apply to us for admission as a solicitor.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to ask for advice about character and suitability issues at the start of the apprenticeship.</p>

6. Subject to Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules, some candidates wishing to qualify through the solicitor apprenticeship route may have already completed the Trailblazer level 3 paralegal apprenticeship. These candidates will have to meet the requirements of the solicitor apprenticeship in full and will not be exempt from any of the SQE assessments. Depending on their experience and skills, they may not need a five or six year solicitor apprenticeship to reach the standard required to pass the SQE but they must meet the minimum requirement of two years' qualifying work experience.
7. Subject to ESFA funding rules, some candidates wishing to qualify through the solicitor apprenticeship route may have already completed a law degree or a Legal Practice Course. These candidates will have to meet the requirements of the solicitor apprenticeship in full and will not be exempt from any of the SQE assessments. Depending on their experience and skills, they may not need a five or six year solicitor apprenticeship to reach the standard required to pass the SQE but they must meet the minimum requirement of two years' qualifying work experience.

#### Notes

1. Five other trailblazer legal apprenticeships have also been approved by BIS: Apprenticeship standard for a paralegal; Apprenticeship standard leading to qualification as a chartered legal executive; Conveyancing technician; Probate technician; Licensed conveyancer. Responsibility for apprenticeships has moved to the Department for Education, the Institute for Apprenticeships and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
2. Gun Judge, Head of Resourcing at Addleshaw Goddard, has been the chair of the Law Trailblazer employer panel, working with Barclays, Browne Jacobson, Burges Salmon, Clyde and Co, DAC Beachcroft, Dentons, DWF, Eversheds, Gateley LLP, Kennedys Law, Lewis Silkin, Mayer Brown, Olswang, Pannone LLP, The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Simmons & Simmons, Stephenson Harwood, Thomas Eggar, Withers, the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx), the Law Society and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to develop the Trailblazer solicitor, paralegal and chartered legal executive apprenticeships.