

News and updates

Image



October 2021

LawCAB gets a new look

The LawCAB site has been updated to provide clearer guidance for applicants on routes into the legal profession, with particular emphasis on the SQE route for solicitors and suitable preparation courses for that route. The new site also features new sections for aspiring barristers, and for those just thinking about a career in the law and wanting to find out more.

We have retained the clean, simple look in My Applications, as we know that was important to you but we hope you like the new look to our information and guidance pages!

Applications are now open!

Applications for 2022/2023 academic year courses are now open. A wide range of programmes offering law students the opportunity to study law conversion (GDL, PgDL, MA Law, LLM), Legal Practice and SQE-focused preparation courses are now available for aspiring solicitors and barristers to apply for. Use our course finder as well as our Where can I study section to find the right course and institution for you. Here's to 2022!

September 2021

The SQE route is now live!

Aspiring solicitors who have not already started their journey to qualification will now qualify through the SQE. See the range of courses available to apply for in our course finder - consider a GDL, PgDL or LLM/MA Law, with or without SQE assessment-specific elements. The journey you take is yours to determine!

August 2021

Last chance to start a GDL for continuation on the LPC route to qualification as a solicitor

If you want to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales via the LPC route and need to do a law conversion (GDL) course first, apply and accept an offer before 31.08.21 and start your GDL before 31.12.21 to be eligible to continue on the LPC route - and keep evidence of your offer, acceptance and start dates. You can still study a GDL to help your preparation for the SQE - see our related FAQ.

LPC closing dates fast approaching!

With application deadlines for many September/October 2021 Legal Practice Courses fast approaching, applicants wishing to start a LPC this autumn are strongly advised to submit outstanding applications and chase up referees to ensure their applications are released prior to courses closing to new applications. A list of LPC providers is available in our Where can I study section.

July 2021

How to decide on your SQE prep course

With the introduction of the SQE route to qualifying as a solicitor, applicants for SQE preparation

courses will have a range of different entry qualifications for these courses. Our SQE FAQs starting with 'What course should I do if...' can help guide applicants on which SQE courses to consider, depending on their existing qualifications.

International applicants and the SQE - questions from the floor

During May-June 2021, we ran a short survey about Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) on our site. We received several questions as part of this survey from international applicants asking specific questions about the SQE and QWE, so we thought it would be helpful to provide some answers to these questions here! If you have a question about the SQE, QWE or anything LawCAB related, do let us know via email and we'll answer it directly, post it in our FAQs or on a blog post like this one.

Q. I'm just finishing my law degree overseas and keen to do the SQE assessments. Can I take the SQE assessments and satisfy the QWE and other necessary requirements without having done a qualifying law degree (QLD), Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), Legal Practice Course (LPC) or a PGDL or Masters course incorporating SQE prep?

Unlike the QLD/GDL & LPC route to qualifying as a solicitor in England and Wales, it is completely up to you how you prepare for the SQE assessments. You may decide that you don't need to prepare for the assessments at all (although we would encourage you to do your research before reaching that decision!). Universities and other course providers offer a variety of courses to help you prepare for the SQE assessments, either through online or face to face teaching, on a part-time or full-time basis. These courses could take the form of university courses eligible for student funding or stand-alone SQE preparation/top-up courses. So you can choose a course that suits you, taking into account the studies you have already undertaken, as well as the areas of interest you might have. As you already have a law degree, you might find that a shorter course covering the areas needed to pass the SQE assessments is all that you need, however, it would be worth checking how much your non-UK law degree covered in terms of the seven key foundations of law (found in a QLD) and how much 'topping up' you need to do to enable you to pass the SQE assessments. Eligibility requirements for SQE courses will depend on the type of course you are applying for so please check before applying. Note: as a UK undergraduate degree **or equivalent** is a requirement for the SQE route overall, you will need your non-UK law degree to be certified as equivalent through a UK ENIC Statement of Comparability.

Q. What counts as QWE for SQE, how can I get work experience to meet the QWE requirements and do I need a sponsor for my QWE placements?

In summary, QWE is any experience of providing legal services that offers you the opportunity to develop some or all of the SRA competences needed to practise as a solicitor. It can be obtained in England and 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. QWE can be completed in up to 4 different organisations, but overall must be 2 years' full time or equivalent in duration. It can be paid or unpaid. It does not have to cover a range of areas of the law, or 'tick off' all the SRA competences in the Statement of Solicitor Competence. However, as SQE1 and SQE2 assessments will cover a broad range of topics, your QWE may not be very useful in preparing you for these assessments if it is focused in only one area of the law. QWE can be completed after you have sat both assessments, although the SRA suggests that it may be helpful to complete QWE before sitting SQE2.

You can get work experience as part of an undergraduate degree 'sandwich year' placement; in a law clinic as a volunteer; in a Citizen's Advice Bureau or doing other charitable or pro bono legal work in law centres or charities; whilst working as a paralegal in one or multiple firms; whilst working as a solicitor's apprentice; as part of a traditional training contract ('Period of Recognised Training') in a City or large national or regional firm, or in a high-street firm or with a sole practitioner. Note that simulated legal services are not eligible to count as QWE. Whilst your work experience can be done overseas, it is essential that, for it to count as QWE, it must meet the SRA requirements and be signed off by an approved person, normally a solicitor of England and Wales or "COLP" (Compliance officer for legal practice) who is on the roll. Read more about where to seek work experience in the UK in the specific FAQ 'What is QWE and how do I get it for the SQE'.

As an international candidate, if you wish to undertake your QWE in the UK, you may need a visa. The type of visa .e.g Student, Skilled worker, Graduate route etc will depend on whether you are studying in the UK, applying at the end of your studies just before starting your QWE, or if you come to the UK just for the purposes of completing your QWE. Your visa sponsor will differ (or may not be required) depending on the nature of your visa. For more information on visa requirements, refer to the UK government website and its visa guide. You may also be interested in the latest news about the government's graduate visa route.

Q. As an international candidate wanting to do a QWE in the UK after completing my SQE course at a UK university, am I eligible to do so on my student visa?

As an international candidate, if you wish to undertake your QWE in the UK at the end of your UK course of study, having been on a Student visa, you will be able to apply for the Graduate visa route. The Graduate route will require a new visa application, which will only be possible from inside the UK. Individuals applying to the Graduate route will not need a sponsor. The UK Home Office has announced (June 2021) that the deadline for current academic year (2020/2021) university students on a Student visa to arrive in the UK to qualify for the UK Graduate route visa has been extended to 27 September 2021. If you graduate and your Student visa leave expires before the Graduate route is introduced, you will not be eligible to apply, however, you will be able to apply to a number of other routes e.g. Skilled Worker, among others. For more information on visa requirements, refer to the UK government website and its visa guide.

Q. I've been working as a paralegal internationally for the past 3 years. Will I have to do a further two years QWE in England or Wales after passing the SQE assessments, or will my international work experience as a paralegal count?

As mentioned previously, whilst your work experience can be done overseas, and does not need to cover English and Welsh law, it is essential that it must meet the SRA QWE requirements and be signed off by an approved person. This needs to be a "COLP" or a solicitor of England and Wales who is on the roll and has direct experience of, or has reviewed, your QWE, knows that it allowed you to gain SRA competences, and is willing to confirm your qualifying work experience.

You can gain experience before, during or after sitting the SQE assessments and can use QWE from previous roles, and 'bank' it for when SQE comes in on 1 September 2021. There are no time limits on when you can claim experience as QWE and so you may have completed the QWE requirement through your paralegal role, providing you are able to get it signed off. You must register two years' worth of QWE by the time you apply for admission as a solicitor in England and Wales but you can register any completed QWE now if you wish to - useful if you want to use a past role as QWE. Note: although the SQE route opens 1 September 2021, the first assessments will run in November 2021

(SQE1) and April 2022 (SQE2) so it is unlikely to fulfil all the SQE criteria and apply to gain entry to the SRA roll before mid-2022.

Q. As an international qualified lawyer, am I eligible for the SQE route and do I have to do all the assessments and QWE?

Qualified international lawyers are eligible to follow the SQE route. Some may be able to apply to the SRA for exemptions to parts of the SQE assessments directly. A few jurisdictions have already been granted exemptions. Your own country's law society or bar would need to make a request for qualification recognition to the SRA directly before you make your application. If, as a qualified lawyer, you are granted an exemption from SQE2, the SRA may require you to demonstrate your English or Welsh language competence. If you are not granted an exemption you will need to pass SQE1 and SQE2 assessments, but qualified lawyers are not required to do qualifying work experience, as the SRA will recognise existing qualification and experience. Existing Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS) candidates can find out how the SQE introduction will affect their existing QLTS application.

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