

Qualifying Work Experience

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What is Qualifying Work Experience?

Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) is the term used for the work experience component of the new [Solicitors Qualifying Examination \(SQE\)](#) route to qualifying as a solicitor in England and Wales. It is any experience providing legal services that offers you the opportunity to develop some or all of the [competences](#) needed to practise as a solicitor.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) which regulates solicitors in England and Wales have produced an [infographic](#) highlighting its versatility, as well as a wide [range of resources](#) to explain what QWE is, how long it should last for, where it can be undertaken and how it should be recorded and signed off. This includes a simple [QWE visual](#) to explain the main components of QWE as well as a helpful [webinar](#) for SQE applicants.

A summary guide to QWE is provided below.

Where can I do it?

Your work experience can be undertaken in England, Wales or overseas.

It can be gained in one block of time or in stages, so long as it is in no more than four organisations. It can be paid or unpaid work and could take place in a variety of settings, for example,

- 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, NGOs or charities
- whilst working as a paralegal in one or multiple law firms or in-house legal teams
- 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.

Simulated legal services are not eligible as QWE.

When should I do it?

There are no requirements about when to undertake QWE; you can do it before, during or after taking your SQE assessments.

Although the SRA recommends that it may be more helpful for QWE to be completed after SQE1 and before SQE2, this approach may not be adopted by all firms and some will expect their trainees to have completed both SQE1 and SQE2 assessments in advance of starting their QWE.

Some firms will have summer deadlines for applications, whereas others will recruit throughout the year. Use firms' specific recruitment webpages to check deadlines and requirements. Many firms currently recruit applicants to traditional trainee roles up to two years in advance of joining a firm, and there is nothing to indicate QWE positions will be any different in large City or national/regional firms.

How do I evidence it?

You need to record your QWE yourself and [register your completed blocks of QWE with the SRA](#). You must have completed your QWE before you apply for admission to the roll of solicitors.

To help aspiring solicitors record their work experience and demonstrate that it meets the required [competences](#), the SRA has developed an online form, which you will be able to access after you have logged in or created your [mySRA account](#).

The SRA will contact your COLP or nominated solicitor to confirm the work experience, once you have logged it. If you anticipate any queries about signing off your QWE from your COLP or nominated solicitor, the SRA has provided [useful guidance](#) on this.

If you have work experience from a current or past roles which you believe has helped you develop some of the competences needed to practise as a solicitor, you can include this in your QWE provided it is signed off by an appropriate individual.

Further information about QWE is available on the [SRA website](#).

Who signs it off?

Your QWE must be signed off by one of the following:

- the COLP ([compliance officer for legal practice](#));
- a solicitor of England and Wales in the organisation, or
- another nominated solicitor of England and Wales outside the organisation but with direct knowledge of the candidate's work.

They do not need to be working in England or Wales but must have knowledge of your work in the role.

What should I be looking for?

When considering your QWE options, think about a placement that will:

- offer a diverse and varied, rather than limited and/or repetitive, legal tasks
- help you develop your professionalism and ethical behaviour
- develop your understanding of standard procedures for e.g. conflicts of interest checks, anti-money laundering checks, information security
- enable you to learn from experienced role models and to be supervised by appropriate individuals
- support your career goals.

Before you start a role, make sure that you are clear about

- What kind of work is being offered?
- Which competences from the SRA Statement of Solicitor Competence will you be able to attain?
- How will you be supervised?
- Will a solicitor be able to sign off your experience?
- How will the evidence of the QWE placement be recorded by the provider and by you?
- How long is the period of the contract or how will the hours be calculated
- Will there be any funding for qualification or support for study activities?

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Do you need QWE?

LawQWE is a new platform due to launch in Spring 2023.

It will connect you with employers in the legal market and help you to find the work experience you need to complete your qualification.

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Would you like to find out more, or help out in developing this new service?

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[Register your interest](#)

Useful tips

A range of websites and resources are available to help you to find firms offering roles that can be used to gain QWE.

[LawCareers.net guide](#) to a career in law contains information about firms that take trainees, organised by geographical region, in addition to summary guides on those firms.

To apply for positions with certain legal firms, you may find the following traditional Training Contract links useful:

- [Lawcareers.net training contract locator](#) and [training contract deadlines](#)
- the [Lawyer Portal training contract guide](#) and [training contract deadlines](#)
- the [government legal services sector](#)
- the [Crown Prosecution Service trainee scheme](#).

For firms and other organisations that do not offer traditional training contracts, you should make use of relevant websites and contact organisations about positions available, as well using as any personal contacts you may have. Other examples of those offering or advertising QWE opportunities may include:

- large companies or not-for-profit organisations with in-house legal staff
- local high street solicitors or small boutique or specialist law firms
- specialist recruitment agencies and online professional networking sites offering trainee solicitor and paralegal roles
- specialist legal websites such as [The Lawyer](#), the [Law Gazette](#)
- [local law centres](#)
- [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#)
- law school legal advice clinics directly via your university

- [LawWorks legal advice clinics](#)
- [Young Legal Aid Lawyers jobs and opportunities.](#)

If you have further questions about QWE, the [SRA Q&A section](#) on QWE may provide answers.

Note: The UK government Home Office [graduate immigration route](#) will be of interest to international applicants as you get towards the end of your UK-based course of study, if you wish to work in the UK after you graduate.

Source URL: <https://www.lawcabs.ac.uk/qualifying-work-experience>