

## **SQE Update - December 2024**

In this bulletin, find out about our SQE evaluation, changes to how SQE2 results will be shown, confirming qualifying work experience, new SQE1 sample questions and lots more news.

### **SQE2 scaled scoring from January**

From the January 2025 sitting, we will be introducing scaled scores for SQE2. This means candidates' scores will be placed on a common scale so candidates' results can be accurately and fairly compared, both within an assessment window and between assessments over time. Scaled scores are routinely used in high stakes professional assessments, for example, in medicine, accountancy and the New York State Bar.

Candidates already get a breakdown of results by assessment station, and this will not change. They will also continue to see their overall mark as a percentage. In addition to this, candidates will now see their mark as a scaled score out of 500, where the pass mark will always be set at 300.

[Read more about scaled scoring for SQE2 \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/12/02/introduction-of-scaled-scores-for-sqe2\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/12/02/introduction-of-scaled-scores-for-sqe2)

### **Evaluating the SQE - look out for an email**

As part of our ongoing evaluation programme, we have commissioned IFF, a social and market research agency, to conduct the first independent evaluation of aspects of the SQE. This will assess whether the SQE is on track to achieve its objectives of:

- providing greater assurance of consistent standards at the point of admission
- encouraging the development of new and diverse pathways to qualification.

IFF will be conducting a survey with candidates, employers and training providers to find out their thoughts and experiences of the SQE and qualifying work experience. A small pilot survey was launched in late November, with a larger survey beginning at the start of 2025. During this time, you may be contacted by IFF to complete the survey, and we would be very grateful if you could do this if contacted. It should only take ten minutes and all responses are confidential.

### **Recruiting freelance SQE2 assessment markers**



Kaplan, the SQE assessment provider, is looking for experienced solicitors to mark the SQE2 written assessments and/or attendance note/legal analysis as it continues to expand its pool of markers. Your role will be to assess the candidates' skills and application of law against the relevant assessment criteria. This role is home-based and full training will be given to new markers. The deadline to apply is 13 December.

[Find out how to register your interest \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/11/26/recruitment-of-freelance-sqe2-assessment-markers\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/11/26/recruitment-of-freelance-sqe2-assessment-markers)

## **New SQE1 sample questions**

We have published 40 new SQE1 sample questions, in addition to the existing 130 questions candidates already have access to. They illustrate the type of questions that appear on the two SQE1 assessments – FLK1 and FLK2.

[Learn more about the new questions \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/11/29/sqe1-sample-questions---release-of-40-new-questions\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/news-item/2024/11/29/sqe1-sample-questions---release-of-40-new-questions)

## **Solicitor apprenticeship**

Launched in 2016, solicitor apprenticeships are a growing pathway for aspiring solicitors to qualify in England. So far, 315 solicitors have qualified through this 'earn as you learn' option. As with all candidates on the SQE route, the apprentices must pass the SQE and meet our other qualification requirements.

When it comes to the SQE exam, our assessment provider Kaplan's analysis shows additional insights into the type of candidate opting for an apprenticeship:

- a higher proportion of apprentices come from working-class backgrounds when compared with the overall SQE candidate cohort (from data on household earner occupation)
- a much higher proportion attended a state school
- a higher proportion said that neither parent attended university.

Learn more about [solicitor apprenticeships \[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/solicitor-apprenticeships/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/solicitor-apprenticeships/) and get detailed information on the [SQE assessment results \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/sqe-reports/\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/sqe-reports/).

## **SQE2 July results now out**

Results for the SQE2 sitting in July 2024 have now been released to more than 900 candidates.

[Find out more about the results \[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/sra/news/july-2024-sqe2-results/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/sra/news/july-2024-sqe2-results/)

## **Solicitor apprentice tells their story**

You can now read a new case study offering a first-hand account by a solicitor apprentice who has taken the SQE. This provides an insight into how they prepared, how challenging they found the exam and their advice and top tips.

[Read their account \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/about-sqa/case-studies/attempting-practice-questions-in-timed-conditions-will-be-a-massive-help/\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/about-sqa/case-studies/attempting-practice-questions-in-timed-conditions-will-be-a-massive-help/)

## **Confirming qualifying work experience**

Under the SQE route, all solicitors are eligible to confirm an SQE candidate's period of qualifying work experience. Even if they haven't been involved in approving training before, they might be asked to do this in the future.

[Find out more about what confirming involves \[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-131-approving-qwe/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-131-approving-qwe/)

## **Taking the SQE in Welsh**

Are you a solicitor or law firm practising in the Welsh language? Are you aware that candidates can now sit both parts of the SQE in Welsh? If you currently offer training or are looking to take on aspiring solicitors, we have information on the SQE assessment that may be of interest.

[Read more about sitting the SQE in Welsh \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/welsh/\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/welsh/)

## **Sitting the SQE in 2025**

All dates relating to the SQE sittings in January, April and July 2025 are now available on the SQE website. There will be two sittings of SQE1 and four sittings for SQE2 during 2025.

[Find out the dates \[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/about-sqa/what-is-the-sqa/timings/\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/about-sqa/what-is-the-sqa/timings/)

## **SQE1 July 2024 results explained**

Results for the most recent SQE1 sitting taken in July 2024 were published on 1 October. These showed the following highlights:

- the overall pass rate for FLK1 was 55%, for candidates sitting for the first time it was 57%



- the overall FLK2 pass rate was 50%, for candidates sitting for the first time it was 52%
- the overall SQE1 pass rate was 44%, for candidates sitting for the first time it was 48%.

These pass rates are lower than those we have seen before. Prior to July 2024, overall pass rates have been in the range: 59-67% for FLK1 and 54-61% for FLK2. The overall SQE1 pass rates have previously been in the range: 51-56%.

Solicitor apprentices had a higher pass rate in July than the general candidate cohort, with a pass rate of 53%.

There is no pre-determined pass rate for the assessments. These rates simply reflect the percentage of candidates in any sitting who meet the standard for a competent day one solicitor.

We make sure the standard required to pass is maintained between sittings. This is why there is no pre-determined pass mark (the mark required to pass the assessment). This is set independently for each paper to allow for any papers that are slightly harder or easier than others. All papers are intended to be equally challenging. However, if, when taken, there is evidence that one paper was slightly harder than others, a slightly lower pass mark will be set for that paper.

One way we make sure that the standard required to pass is maintained between papers and sittings is by using common or repeat questions. In other words, the exam papers include some questions that have been used before. This enables us to compare how well candidates in different sittings perform on those questions.

When we looked at how well the July candidates performed on questions that had been included in previous exams, we saw that, overall, this candidate cohort was weaker than previous ones. We saw that fewer candidates answered those questions correctly than when they were previously used.

Candidates can be assured that they will be assessed to a consistent standard, whenever they sit the SQE.

## **Looking to take or already have the Legal Practice Course?**

Candidates who fall within our SQE transitional arrangements have the choice to continue qualifying as a solicitor through the Legal Practice Course (LPC) route or following the SQE route.

If someone is thinking about taking the LPC or already has it they should consider the following:

- Can you get a period of recognised training?

To qualify through the LPC route, you must complete a period of recognised training (PRT). Training opportunities are changing, and there are fewer PRTs (also known as a training contract) available. The requirements for the PRT are less flexible than qualifying work experience (QWE), the 'on-the-job' training under the SQE route, so this could be a barrier for you. Also, the last date on which you can be admitted on this route is 31 December 2032.

- Are LPCs still available?

The LPC continues to be offered by some providers, but many have already withdrawn their courses. You need to check which providers are still offering it and when they will stop.

- Can you complete QWE instead of a PRT?

You can only do this if you also pass the SQE2 assessment. This would mean more costs on top of your LPC fees. If you do not already have an LPC, it may be better not to do an LPC but to take the SQE route.

- Will your LPC adequately prepare you for SQE2 if you decide to complete QWE and SQE2 instead of a PRT?

If taking SQE2 without having first passed SQE1, candidates should be aware when deciding how to prepare for the assessment that the SQE is at a higher level than the LPC.

The SQE assesses a candidate's competence to practise as a solicitor. The LPC assessed a candidate's readiness to undertake a PRT. Candidates should also be aware that both skills and knowledge are assessed in SQE2. The knowledge aspects of the assessment are drawn from SQE1 - the Foundations of Legal Knowledge.

SQE2 candidates who have the LPC, but have not taken SQE1, generally do not perform as well in SQE2 as those who passed SQE1.

| <b>SQE2 sitting</b> | <b>Pass rate of candidates who had taken SQE1</b> | <b>Pass rate of candidates who had not taken SQE1</b> |
|---------------------|---|---|
| April 2024          | 83%   | 36%   |
| July 2024           | 80%   | 44%   |

Therefore, candidates with an LPC may need additional top-up training to pass SQE2. This could add cost and time to your qualification journey. Find out more about our [transitional arrangements](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/) [\[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/) and what [SQE2 courses/training](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/sqe-training-courses/training) [\[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/sqe-training-courses/training\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/sqe-training-courses/training) [\[https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/sqe-training-courses/training-provider-list/\]](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/sqe-training-courses/training) is available.

## Other ways to get involved

Join our [LinkedIn reference group](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8548868/). It will help you keep up to date with the latest SQE developments and opportunities to get involved in our surveys and events.

If you are thinking about taking the SQE, or know someone who is, please follow [Career in Law](https://www.facebook.com/careerinlaw) for the latest information aimed at aspiring solicitors.

If you have any questions, or want more information on how you can get involved, [contact us](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/).

## Subscribe

If you would like us to tell you when we publish new information on the SQE, please [subscribe to SQE Update alerts](https://consultations.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sqe-update/sqe-subscribe/).

Find out more about the [SQE](https://www.sra.org.uk/sqe/).