

## The SQE and ME

### 2021-2022 Academic Year

#### What does SQE stand for?

Solicitors Qualifying Examination

#### What is it?

The SQE is a common assessment or a single, national licensing examination that all prospective solicitors will take before qualifying.

#### How does it work?

Anyone looking to become a solicitor after 1 September 2021 will need to:

- have a degree in any subject (or equivalent qualification or experience)
- pass two stages of SQE assessment: SQE1 will test functioning legal knowledge across 13 areas of law; SQE2 will test practical legal skills, including legal research, writing, advocacy, client interviewing and case analysis, through at least 16 written and oral assessed tasks.
- gain two years' qualifying work experience that must be signed off by a solicitor
- meet the SRA's character and suitability requirements

#### So what about the LPC and Training Contract?

The SQE will replace the LPC and training contract. However, there will be a transition phase (see below).

#### What are the assessments?

##### **SQE 1 (Functioning Legal Knowledge and Practical Legal Skills Assessments)**

SQE1 will test functioning legal knowledge across 13 areas of law. This will include substantive and procedural law and cover core subjects currently taught on LLB.

You **must** pass SQE 1 before moving onto SQE 2.

##### **SQE 2 (Practical Legal Skills Assessments)**

SQE2 will test practical legal skills, including legal research, writing, advocacy, client interviewing and case analysis, through at least 16 written and oral assessed tasks:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/students/sqe/sqe-assessments/>

#### When will it be introduced?

Autumn 2021

PLEASE NOTE: there are ongoing updates.  
CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING: February 2021



### **I am a prospective student thinking of applying to Newcastle University Law School to commence studies in 21/22 so what does this mean for me?**

Newcastle Law School is continually reviewing its curriculum. As the details for the SQE currently stand and as they continue to emerge, we cannot say that we can provide students with all the necessary updated knowledge to sit SQE 1 immediately post-graduation without preparation training for the SQE being undertaken, although our LLB students will study many of the subjects covered in SQE 1.

As part of the Law Degree you will also have the opportunity to practice and develop many of the DRAIN (Drafting, Research, Advocacy, Interviewing, Negotiation) skills required for SQE 2 as well as developing other skills such as Mediation.

### **I am in Stage 1 and have just started my Qualifying Law Degree so what does this mean for me?**

As you have started before Autumn 2021 you can either complete the academic and vocational stages during the transitional period (see below) or take the SQE. As you will Graduate in 2023 you will hopefully have the benefit of seeing how SQE 1 has been implemented but likely your first opportunity to sit will be November 2023.

### **I am in Stage 2 what does this mean for me?**

As you have started before 1st September 2021 you can either complete the academic and vocational stages during the transitional period or take the SQE. As you will Graduate in Summer 2022 you could first sit SQE1 in November 2022.

### **I am on my ILS/ELS/placement year what does this mean for me?**

As you have started before 1st September 2021 you can either complete the academic and vocational stages during the transitional period or take the SQE. As you will Graduate in Summer 2022 you could first sit SQE1 in November 2022.

### **I am in stage 3 what does this mean for me?**

As you have started before 1st September 2021 you can either complete the academic and vocational stages during the transitional period or take the SQE. As you will Graduate in Summer 2021 you could first sit SQE1 in November 2021.

### **When will the first opportunity to sit SQE1 be?**

The SQE will be introduced in Autumn 2021 and initially there will be two exam sittings per year. The first sitting for SQE 1 will be in November 2021.

You will only be able to take SQE 2 after passing SQE 1

### **When will the first opportunity to take SQE 2 be?**

April 2022

PLEASE NOTE: there are ongoing updates.  
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### What is the transitional period?

Someone who is already on their way can choose to qualify through the existing routes or the SQE. This includes anyone who has started, completed or accepted an offer for the Common Professional Examination or a Qualifying Law Degree before 1 September 2021. You will have 11 years after the SQE is introduced to qualify in this way (so until 2032).

### What will happen to the Legal Practice Course?

The SRA will continue to authorise Legal Practice Courses (LPC) until the end of the 2024/25 academic year. But be aware that courses may close as the expected demand for the LPC decreases. The SRA will have authorised a course subject to a number of conditions to make sure that they are aware if a course is closing.

### LPC or SQE Decision Tree

If you are deciding which route to take please see the SRA's LPC or SQE decision tree. It takes you through a few questions relating to where you are to identify which might be the best option for you: <https://www.sra.org.uk/students/sqe/lpc-sqe-decision-tree/>

### What is Newcastle Law School doing?

We are reviewing our curriculum and looking at opportunities to develop our Law Degree programme. As the details for the SQE currently stand and as they continue to emerge, we cannot say that we can provide students with all the necessary updated knowledge to sit SQE 1 immediately post-graduation without preparation training for the SQE being undertaken. Although our LLB students will study many of the subjects covered in SQE 1.

### How do I prepare to sit for the SQE?

You will find that various providers will introduce preparation courses for the SQE. The cost of this will be separate to the cost of the actual examinations.

### Where can I sit the exam?

The SQE will be available to sit in England and Wales, as well as some international locations (SQE 1 only).

### What do you have to do in the exam?

**SQE 1** Following the pilot and based on guidance from the SRA, SQE 1 will involve 2 papers of 180 multiple choice questions and will span across 2 days. SQE 1 will focus on assessing functioning legal knowledge.

For **SQE 2**, you will do role-plays, as well as written work. There will be a more limited choice of Test centres for this assessment. SQE 2 will focus on skills testing.

### So what is the cost?

The total fee for taking both SQE assessments will be £3,980. When it is introduced in September 2021, these fees will cover:

- SQE1 - £1,558 for ten hours of examinations testing candidates' functioning legal knowledge.

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- SQE2 - £2,422 for 14 hours of written and oral tasks testing both practical legal knowledge and skills, such as advocacy, legal research and case and matter analysis.

This does not include any additional training you might need which will be dependent on the provider.

### Can I re-sit?

You will only be allowed three attempts at the assessment. These have to be taken within six years.

### If I pass SQE 1 and SQE 2 what happens then?

All candidates will need to complete at least two-years full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience. This is the work experience part of qualifying as a solicitor after autumn 2021.

### What is qualifying work experience?

Qualifying work experience is any experience of providing legal services that offers the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge required to work as a solicitor.

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 include time spent:

- on placement during a law degree
- on a vacation scheme
- in a student law clinic
- working for Citizen Advice
- working as a paralegal
- in a traditional two-year training contract

You need to complete the two years by the time you apply for admission. You could start gaining it now and 'banking' it for when SQE comes in Autumn 2021.

So if I applied for one of the placement years offered by Newcastle University Law

### School I could count that towards my qualifying work experience?

Yes

**BUT note:** If you plan to use your current experience, you should start to think about how you will record it and who will sign it off see: <https://www.sra.org.uk/students/sqe/qualifying-work-experience/>

### The LSB formally approved the SRA application to introduce the SQE:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2020-press-release-archive/sqe-approved-lsb/> .

We would still urge you to keep looking at the following link to update:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/students/sqe/> .

We will forward regular updates on the SQE as and when we receive them.

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