

Student information pack

Updated 25 October 2023

You can only qualify through this route if you meet our [transitional requirements](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/).
[\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/becoming-solicitor-legal-practice-course-transitional-requirements/)

If you do not meet these, you will need to qualify under the [SQE](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/)
[\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/)

Information for students, and others, wishing to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales

Status of this document

This document sets out our requirements for individuals seeking to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales prior to the introduction of the Solicitors Qualification Examination (SQE). It also contains non-mandatory guidance for people who meet the transitional requirements to become qualified as a solicitor of England and Wales.

Overview of the regulatory framework

We have a statutory duty to make sure that those who are admitted as solicitors have the knowledge and skills necessary for practice. We do this by specifying the education and training that an individual must complete. These requirements are set out in the [Authorisation of Individuals Regulations](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) and the [Education, Training and Assessment Provider Regulations](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/).

The regulations refer to two key stages to qualifying as a solicitor under the LPC route:

- the academic stage
- the vocational stage

The academic stage is achieved by either a university degree in law or a university degree in a different subject and completing the Common Professional Examination (CPE) sometimes also referred to as the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL).

The vocational stage comprises

- the Legal Practice Course (LPC),
- a period of recognised training of two years (PRT), and
- the Professional Skills Course (PSC).

Overview of education and training requirements

There are a number of ways that an individual can complete the academic stage of training under the LPC route but if you are studying in a UK university, the usual ways to qualify under the LPC route are by either first completing a qualifying law degree (QLD) at a UK university, or a degree in a different subject at a UK university and the Common Professional Examination (CPE), sometimes also called the Graduate Diploma in Law or GDL.

This is then followed by completion of the Legal Practice Course (LPC), a postgraduate professional qualification which prepares you for work-based learning; and finally by completing a period of recognised training and the Professional Skills Course.

To be admitted as a solicitor, you will also have to meet our requirements as to character and suitability.

The QLD route

QLD

- this is the academic stage

LPC

- this is the first part of the vocational stage

PRT and PSC

- the final part of the vocational stage
- the PSC is normally completed during PRT

Admission

- education and training requirements met
- character and suitability assessed

The Common Professional Exam route - this route will only be open to you if you have accepted an offer of a place on a CPE by 1 September 2021

First degree

- in any discipline from a UK University

CPE/GDL

- this completes the academic stage

LPC

- this is the first part of the vocational stage

PRT and PSC

- the final part of the vocational stage
- the PSC is normally completed during PRT

Admission

- education and training requirements met
- character and suitability assessed

The Academic Stage of Training

A QLD is an undergraduate law degree that is recognised by the SRA for the purpose of permitting graduates to proceed to the vocational stage of training under the LPC route. There are specific requirements regarding the subjects that you must study and the number of assessment attempts that you are permitted. For example to be a qualifying law degree, the degree must include study of the seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge. There are also requirements relating to the amount of credits that must be allocated to the

study of law on the degree and the number of assessment attempts a student is permitted.

The seven Foundations of Legal Knowledge are the key areas of law and principles which provide students with a sound body of knowledge from which to study other specialist areas of law and progress towards qualification as a solicitor. They are Contract, Tort, Criminal Law, Constitutional and Administrative Law, Property Law, Equity and Trusts, and the Law of the European Union.

Not all law degrees are QLDs, and you should ensure, if you wish to qualify as a solicitor under the LPC route, that the programme you undertake is a QLD that started on or before 31 December 2021 (where you accepted the offer on or before 21 September 2021). Details about the QLD and its requirements can be found in Appendix 4 of the [Academic Stage Handbook \(PDF 46 pages, 415K\)](#)

[\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/academic-stage/academic-stage-handbook.pdf) and an up-to-date [register of QLDs](#) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/qualifying-law-degree-providers/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/qualifying-law-degree-providers/) is available.

Common Professional Examination/Graduate Diploma in Law

This is sometimes referred to as the conversion course route and is for people qualifying under the LPC route who have an undergraduate degree, but not in law. It involves successful completion of the SRA's Common Professional Examination (CPE) or Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) provided by institutions that we approve. The CPE and the GDL are largely the same thing: the CPE is the professional qualification and the GDL is the academic award. In any event either will be treated as having met the academic stage requirements.

To qualify with a CPE under the LPC route, you must have accepted an offer on a CPE course on or by 1 September 2021.

CILEx route to qualification for fellows

Chartered Legal Executives (CILEx) may also be exempt from part or parts of the academic and vocational stages.

Full details of the exemptions available can be found in the [Equivalent Means guidance](#) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/).

Justice Clerks Assistants route to qualification

Justices' Clerks' Assistants may be entitled to exemptions. Further details are contained in the [Equivalent Means guidance](#) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/).

The Vocational Stage of Training

To complete the vocational stage of training under the LPC route, you will be required to complete the LPC, a period of recognised training, and the Professional Skills Course (the PSC).

Legal Practice Course

The LPC is a professional postgraduate course which aims to prepare you for the work-based learning you will do in training and also as a general preparation for the work you will do as a solicitor. It can be studied full time or part time, with an authorised [LPC provider](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/lpc-course-providers/) [https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/lpc-course-providers/].

The course is made up of two stages. Stage 1 is made up of the core practice areas of Litigation, Property and Business, legal skills, such as advocacy and legal drafting. This is also where you will learn about the rules of professional conduct and solicitors accounts. Stage 2 is made up of vocational electives, such as Employment Law, Family Law, Commercial Property Law. The vocational electives focus on specialist areas of law and practice.

Completion of the LPC means that you have been assessed in and demonstrated that you have successfully met the [Outcomes](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/) [https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/] for the course.

Exemptions

Exemptions from certain elements of the LPC are permitted to graduates of the Bar Vocational Course (BVC) and Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) under the SRA's accreditation of prior learning policy.

Graduates of either the Bar Vocational Course (BVC) or the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) are permitted exemptions from attendance and assessment in some areas of the LPC. BVC graduates are exempt from the following areas:

- Stage 1 – Litigation, advocacy, drafting, practical legal research
- Stage 2 – Two vocational electives.

BPTC graduates are exempt from the following areas:

- Stage 1 – Litigation, advocacy, drafting
- Stage 2 – Two vocational electives

The credit may only be awarded where the student has completed the BVC or BPTC no earlier than five years prior to the date of his or her enrolment on the LPC course.

Other types of programmes

There are some programmes available under the LPC route that combine the academic stage with the vocational stage, these are called Exempting Law Degrees. These programmes are typically four years in length, and upon completion, a student can commence their period of recognised training. [Find details of those providers who offer an Exempting Law degree](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/exempting-law-degrees/) [https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/exempting-law-degrees/].

Period of recognised training

Training can take place after the LPC or whilst you are completing the LPC. Training is structured, supervised work-based learning, and is usually for a period of two years. As a trainee you will be required to meet the [Practice Skills Standards](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/professional-skills-course/professional-skills-course-providers/psc-written-standards/) [https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/professional-skills-course/professional-skills-course-providers/psc-written-standards/]. You will also be required to complete the Professional Skills Course (PSC); we recommend that you do this during the period of recognised training.

The Practice Skills Standards are set out in the information packs for authorised training providers and the one for trainees. They describe the skills that you should acquire during your training and also the type of activities that you should be doing in order to develop the skills of a solicitor.

Professional Skills Course

The [Professional Skills Course](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/professional-skills-course/professional-skills-course-information-pack/) is studied during your training. It builds upon the knowledge and skills you have acquired during your study on the LPC. The course is made up of three compulsory areas and electives. It can be taken during your training and you must pass all elements of the course. [View details of the authorised PSC providers](#).

Character and Suitability

The route to qualification as a solicitor in England and Wales also requires successfully meeting the requirements expressed in our [Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/).

We are responsible for setting and maintaining standards for all solicitors practising in England and Wales. We therefore have a duty to consider the character and suitability of anyone who wishes to enter the profession. We must make sure that any individual admitted as a solicitor has, and maintains, the level of honesty, integrity and professionalism expected by the public and other stakeholders and professionals, and does not pose a risk to the public or the profession.

We assess the character and suitability of all applicants when they apply for admission against the criteria set out in the Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules.

Every case is considered on its merits. We will ask for written confirmation of the relevant issues, and individuals may be asked to appear before a Solicitors Regulation Authority adjudicator to explain their situation.

You may also seek an early assessment if there is a risk that you may not later qualify for admission on the grounds of an issue of [character and suitability](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/character-and-suitability/).

To have your character and suitability assessed early you need to complete the assessment of Character and Suitability.

Failure to disclose convictions and other issues is a serious matter. This may result in refusal of admission as a solicitor in England and Wales.

Contact information

For general information about qualifying as a solicitor please visit the following links:

- [Admission as a solicitor](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/decision-making/guidance/admission-solicitor/)
- [Equivalent Means guidance](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/)
- [Solicitors Qualifying Examination](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/)

For general information or advice on qualifying as a solicitor, please [contact us](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/).