

## **SQE Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Risk Assessment update on progress (April 2017 - July 2020)**

In line with the Bridge Group's recommendations, we have taken time to carefully develop and test the SQE. We issued a third consultation on the regulations that will implement the new approach. And we made further changes as a result of that consultation.

We have appointed Kaplan as the SQE assessment provider and have worked closely with them to develop a fair assessment that will be valid<sup>1</sup>[\[#n2\]](#), reliable<sup>2</sup>[\[#n3\]](#), manageable and value for money. We have worked closely with Kaplan to develop the detail of the assessment with potential EDI risks and opportunities in mind.

We have also included obligations within the contract with Kaplan to require them to adopt an approach to equality, diversity and inclusion that is at least equivalent to that taken by the SRA, as evidenced by our strategies and policies relating to such matters. We will monitor Kaplan's compliance with this requirement. This will include making sure that Kaplan include a comprehensive package of measures in the live assessments to make sure that the assessment is fair to all candidates. For example, recruiting a diverse range of assessors and providing specific training for assessors.

We have engaged extensively with stakeholders throughout the testing, piloting and design of the SQE to make sure that the design is informed by stakeholder views, potential market impact and considers possible EDI risks and benefits.

Since 2017, we have had 28,000 interactions with interested parties, through almost 300 meetings and events, broadcasts and webinars. We have had more than 1,200 responses across 14 surveys on a number of topics, as well as 467 pieces of coverage in the media.

Online we have had 435,000 visits to our SQE-related web pages, as well as more than 24,000 engagements and almost 1.85m impressions on social media. Since launching our new dedicated [SQE bulletin](#) [\[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sqe-update/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sqe-update/) in January, we now have more than 1,340 subscribers to the email alerts telling people about the latest SQE news.

We have met regularly with interest groups including the Law Society and their divisions: Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division, Lawyers with Disabilities Division and Junior Lawyers Division.

We have also met regularly with the Sole Practitioners' Group and the City of London Law Society. We have engaged closely with groups



including the Black Solicitors Network, Society of Asian Lawyers, British Nigeria Law Forum, Society of British Bangladeshi Solicitors, the Hindu Lawyers Association and the Birmingham Black Lawyers.

And we have worked throughout with our SQE Reference Group<sup>3</sup>, which also includes representatives from specific interest groups, and our LinkedIn Group, which has a wide membership (around 1,750+ members drawn from the profession, universities and other training providers), on specific issues including EDI impact, reasonable adjustments and the final design of the SQE assessments.

Taking into account the views expressed and evidence gathered over this period we have now decided on and published the final design and the [cost of the SQE assessments](https://sqa.org.uk/registering-and-booking) [https://sqa.org.uk/registering-and-booking]. This is discussed in detail below.

The training market is developing. A number of providers have already made public their plans for SQE training. This is important because it will help realise the potential of the new approach to offer wide and flexible pathways offering aspiring solicitors more choice and ways of qualifying that suit their circumstances and means. For example, from our discussions with training providers we expect there to be more choices involving online provision which will be cost effective and suit candidates with, for example, caring or other responsibilities.

We have published the final assessment specification for [SQE1](https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe1-assessment-specification) [https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe1-assessment-specification] and [SQE2](https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe2-assessment-specification) [https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe2-assessment-specification]. We have also published [sample SQE1 questions](https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe1-sample-questions) [https://sqa.org.uk/exam-arrangements/assessment-information/sqe1-sample-questions]. SQE2 sample questions will be published later this year.

We have published [initial resources](https://upgrade.sqa.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/) [https://upgrade.sqa.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/] on the SQE. These include information about how candidates can take advantage of qualifying work experience and information specifically for candidates with individual needs. We plan to publish more information as SQE implementation gets closer, in line with the Bridge Group recommendations, and we have engaged with stakeholders on what information would be helpful.

## Notes

1. Validity is the extent to which an assessment accurately measures what it is intended to measure
2. Reliability is the degree to which an assessment produces stable and consistent results over time
3. The reference group has representatives from the following groups: Access to justice foundation, AGCAS, Association of Law Teachers, Apprenticeship employer group, Bar Standards Board, Black

Solicitors Network, Committee of Heads of UK Law Schools, City of London Law Society, Cam Exam, GMC, Government Legal Service, Institute for Apprenticeships, Junior Lawyers Division, Lawyers with Disabilities, Legal education and training group, Lexis Nexus, Society of Legal Scholars, Socio Legal Studies Association, Society of Asian Lawyers, Sutton Trust, The Law Society and the Young Legal Aid Lawyers Group.

There is also membership representation from the following universities and training providers: BARBRI, Cardiff University, University of Manchester, University of Buckingham and University College London. Representatives from the following firms are also attendees: Blake Morgan, Lawnet and Riverview.