

Education and Training

July 2021

Read in Welsh [\[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/addysg-a-hyfforddiant/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/addysg-a-hyfforddiant/)

We set the education and training standards for solicitors to make sure the people we allow into the profession are competent. This is so that people who use legal services get a proper standard of service from their solicitor.

We want everyone who joins the profession to meet the same high professional standards. September 2021 marks the introduction of a single rigorous assessment, the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). This will replace the current routes to qualification as a solicitor. It will give both the public and the profession confidence in legal services and encourage more flexibility and choice in training. The flexibility, which will include 'earn as you learn' options, will also help to encourage a diverse profession, attracting the brightest and the best from every community.

The tables below detail our work in education and training and highlight key trends and patterns. A glossary of terms can be found at the end of this page.

Please note, our business year is 1 November to 31 October. Unless otherwise stated, these figures are as of the October in the latter year – ie, the figures for 2019/20 are as at 31 October 2020.

[Open all \[#\]](#)

Routes to admission

[Solicitors currently enter the profession through a range of routes \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/). These are:

- Taking a traditional law degree or a non-law degree and the common professional examination, followed by the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and then a Period of Recognised Training (PRT).
- Qualifying as a solicitor under the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS).
- Applying as a registered European lawyer (conditions apply). Following the UK's exit from the EU in 2020, only Swiss lawyers have been able to qualify through this route from January 2021.
- Applying as a solicitor already admitted in Northern Ireland or Ireland.
- Qualifying as a Chartered Legal Executive and then going on to take the LPC.
- Applying as an assistant justice's clerk (conditions apply).
- Equivalent means. This allows individuals to qualify by showing they have met our requirements for a particular stage of training by demonstrating that they have equivalent experience.

The table below show the number of individuals that joined the profession from each route from 2013 to 2020. The total number of new solicitors entering the profession has remained steady over the past even years, at around 6,500 per year.

2013/14 2014/15 2015/16 2016/17 2017/18 2018/19 2019/20

LPC then PRT	5,320	5,304	5,501	5,513	5,575	5,744	5,475
QLTS	251	346	421	541	603	521	606
CILEX and assistant justices' clerks	137	204	240	251	323	343	323
Republic of Ireland	158	134	148	136	131	188	124
Northern Ireland	27	32	31	17	28	35	31
EQM (from 2014/15)	-	8	66	71	85	88	99
REL	20	32	29	53	34	76	60
QLTT	498	51	24	24	7	8	5
Other	-	-	-	1	-	-	0
Total	6,411	6,111	6,460	6,607	6,786	7,003	6,723

Please note:

- The Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT) was a precursor to and has now been largely phased out and replaced by the QLTS. A small number of individuals still enter the profession by this route.
- Other can mean the individual was admitted via a Morgenbesser exemption application (for those who are part qualified under an EU qualification).
- Some of these figures differ slightly with what we have reported in previous years. We are now collecting this information in a new way and have reviewed past data. This new approach allows for greater clarity on what route an applicant has taken, with more routes identified in the table above, and we have corrected any past data errors.

Organisations carrying out a period of recognised training (PRT)

We authorise organisations to provide a PRT, the work-based part of a solicitor's training. Around three-quarters of these are law firms, and the rest are in-house legal teams or law centres.

The increasing number of organisations authorised to carry out a PRT reflects a growing demand from firms to develop talent and train aspiring solicitors within their own business.

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
4,482	4,881	5,163	5,497	5,746	5,877	6,219

[Solicitor apprenticeships](#)

Qualifying through the solicitor apprenticeship offers an opportunity to earn-as-you-learn on the job, while removing the expense of training and the cost of taking exams. It encourages people from all types of backgrounds to become



solicitors. We developed the Trailblazer solicitor apprenticeship in law with employers to make sure it provides the training they need and want.

We are pleased to see that the number of solicitor apprenticeships continues to increase. All solicitor apprentices will qualify through taking the SQE.

The figures below are taken from the summer of each year.

2016/17 2017/18 2018/2019 2019/20

30 107 170 242

Please note that, due to a data error, we previously misreported the number of solicitor apprenticeships. The figures shown now are correct.

Character and suitability

We assess whether candidates for admission as a solicitor are fit to enter the profession through our [character and suitability test](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/1) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/1]. The questions we ask include whether the applicant has been convicted of any criminal offence, whether they have been subject to any enforcement action by another regulator and whether they have ever been declared bankrupt. In making our decisions, we consider all the information applicants give to us and, where there are potential concerns as to their suitability, any evidence to show they have taken steps to reform their character.

Individuals refused entry to the profession 2013-2020

Each year, we refuse a handful of applicants. The reasons are, generally, that the applicant has failed to disclose an important piece of information relating to their character or suitability, or they have failed to meet our requirements. The refusals we make each year are limited in number as some people withdraw their applications when they cannot meet our requirements.

The spike in refusals in 2013/14 relates to an influx of individuals applying for admission under the QLTT scheme before it was replaced with the QLTS. Many individuals were unable to show they had the necessary work experience needed to transfer under the scheme and were therefore not eligible to apply for admission.

2013/14 2014/15 2015/16 2016/17 2017/18 2018/19 2019/20

31 13 2 5 4 3 3

Please note, due to a data error, we misreported the number of individuals refused in our 2015/16 Annual Review and 2017/18 Annual Review. The figures shown now are correct.

Higher rights of audience

A higher rights of audience qualification allows solicitors to act as an advocate in the higher courts. These are the Crown Court, High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court in England and Wales. The number of solicitors we regulate that have higher rights of audience can be seen below.

There has been a gradual increase in the number of solicitors with a higher rights of audience qualification over the past seven years. This rise is driven by increases in those with a qualification to appear in civil cases, while there has been a slight drop in those who have rights for criminal cases or both.

The percentages represent a proportion of how many individuals have rights to appear in civil cases, criminal cases, or both for the year shown on the left.

	Civil	Criminal	Both	Total
2013/14	1,444 (23%)	3,352 (53%)	1,575 (25%)	6,371
2014/15	1,613 (25%)	3,372 (52%)	1,556 (24%)	6,541
2015/16	1,797 (27%)	3,363 (50%)	1,528 (23%)	6,688
2016/17	1,947 (29%)	3,305 (49%)	1,483 (22%)	6,735
2017/18	2,131 (31%)	3,272 (48%)	1,464 (21%)	6,867
2018/19	2,279 (33%)	3,200 (46%)	1,437 (21%)	6,916
2019/20	2,439 (35%)	3,153 (45%)	1,417 (20%)	7,009

Education and training – glossary

Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx)

Provides training to become a legal executive and regulates legal executives.

Common Professional Examination (CPE)

A postgraduate law course taken by non-law graduates who wish to become a solicitor or barrister in England and Wales. Also known as the Graduate Diploma in Law.

Equivalent means (EQM)

A route to admission as a solicitor which allows individuals to show they have met our requirements for a particular stage of training by demonstrating that they have equivalent experience.

Legal Practice Course (LPC)

A vocational stage of training just before the period of recognised training (see below). It combines academic and practical training, to prepare students for work in a law firm.

Period of recognised training (PRT)

Work-based learning, typically in a law firm, which forms part of the vocational stage in the route to qualifying as a solicitor.

Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS)



The scheme involves assessments that people must take if they are already qualified as a lawyer in another jurisdiction and want to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales. Barristers practising in England and Wales and who wish to cross-qualify as a solicitor will also qualify through this route.

Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT)

This test performs the same role as the QLTS. It has now been largely phased out and replaced by the QLTS. A small number of individuals still enter the profession by this route.

Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)

A single rigorous assessment which will be introduced in September 2021 that all new aspiring solicitors will need to take to qualify as a solicitor. It will be split into two parts, SQE1 and SQE2, and will assess functioning legal knowledge and practical legal skills.

Further information

[The Solicitors Qualifying Examination \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/)

[Regulation and Education Authorisation and Monitoring Activity \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/education-training-authorisation-monitoring-activity/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/education-training-authorisation-monitoring-activity/)

[Number of practising solicitors having Higher Rights of Audience \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/statistics/regulated-community-statistics/data/higher_rights_of_audience/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/statistics/regulated-community-statistics/data/higher_rights_of_audience/)

[SRA corporate strategy 2020 to 2023 \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/)