



# SQE2 Pilot Key Information

5 June 2020

## Q&A

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### **Q1. What is the SQE?**

**The SQE is a new common assessment for all would-be solicitors, which will be introduced in autumn 2021. More**

In the future, all those wishing to [qualify as a solicitor \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/) will need to:

- pass the two stages of examination (SQE1 and SQE2)
- have a degree or equivalent qualification or experience
- complete two years' qualifying work experience
- meet our character and suitability requirements.

### **Q2. What is Kaplan?**

**Kaplan is a global education and assessment organisation which has been appointed by the SRA to design, develop and deliver the SQE. More**

Kaplan will design and run the pilot.

### **Q3. What was the pilot?**

**This is the pilot for SQE2. It involved written and oral legal skills assessments and a multiple choice test of the Functioning Legal Knowledge using single best answer questions. More**

It is not proposed that SQE2 will include a single best answer multiple choice test but it was included in the pilot for purposes of data analysis.

### **Q4. Who was eligible to sit the pilot?**

**Candidates for the SQE2 pilot were selected to create a sample group which, as far as possible, is as representative of those who will sit the SQE when it is introduced. More**

We were looking for candidates with and without work experience in English and Welsh law. This could include:

- paralegals
- chartered legal executives
- trainee solicitors
- solicitor apprentices.

Candidates should have at least one of the following education and experience criteria:

- completed Stage 1 (the compulsory element) of the Legal Practice Course (LPC); or
- completed a period of study and/or work experience equivalent to Stage 1 (the compulsory stage) of the LPC; or
- be a qualified lawyer in a recognised jurisdiction eligible to qualify via the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme; or
- be a barrister of England and Wales.

Individuals who fell into the categories below were not eligible to take part in the pilot:

- qualified Solicitors of England and Wales
- those who are able to apply for qualification by the time of the pilot (10 December 2019)
- those sitting the QLTS OSCE assessments in November 2019 and therefore will be awaiting their results at the date of the pilot.

This is because they will not be at the same stage of qualifying as candidates who will eventually sit the SQE.

### **Q5. Could candidates have had extra time in the pilot due to a specific learning need or disability?**

#### **All candidates were assessed against the same standard. More**

However we liaised with candidates that requested reasonable adjustments and, where appropriate, made reasonable adjustments to the way they were assessed in line with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Q6. How long were the days?**

#### **Days 1 and 2 (computer-based assessments, see below): candidates attended for approximately 6.5 hours. More**

Days 3-5 (oral and written assessments, see below): candidates attend for approximately 3.5/4 hours.

## **Q7. When and where did the pilot take place?**

**The SQE2 pilot took place over five days but candidates only needed to attend on four of them. It took place between 10-11 December and 13-15 December 2019. More**

Candidates selected needed to attend on all the days specified to them.

### **Days 1 and 2:**

**10-11 December (written assessments including a multiple-choice test element):** These were computer-based assessments and took place at Pearson VUE test centres in the UK. A large selection of test centres were available but places at any particular centre were subject to demand and availability. Candidates selected a test centre once they accepted a place on the pilot. Candidates needed to attend both assessment days.

### **Days 3-5:**

**13-15 December (oral and written assessments):** The assessments took place at:

- [Royal College of General Practitioners, 30 Euston Square, London, NW1 2FB](https://goo.gl/maps/wW74ZEKkEAMXYquyT9) [<https://goo.gl/maps/wW74ZEKkEAMXYquyT9>]
- [Kaplan, Spring House, 40-44 Holloway Road, Highbury East, London N7 8JL](https://goo.gl/maps/T7Hjw8DRhQgxnHXf9). [<https://goo.gl/maps/T7Hjw8DRhQgxnHXf9>]

Candidates selected to sit the pilot were notified of which location they should attend after they accepted the offer to take part. These assessments were not computer based.

Candidates needed to attend only on two days for this part of the pilot.

Candidates attended on different days according to the specialisation they completed (see '[What were candidates tested on?](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/pilot/sqe2-key-information/#testedon)' [<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/pilot/sqe2-key-information/#testedon>]. for more information about the specialisations). Candidates were told which days to attend after they accepted the offer to take part.

## **Q8. Was food provided?**

**No. Water was available at the assessment venues but food and water are not permitted inside the Pearson**

## **VUE test rooms. More**

Candidates made their own arrangements to bring food and other refreshments with them.

## **Q9. What is the benefit in taking the SQE2 pilot?**

**Evidence of performance. Candidates will receive a transcript with detailed results including an indication of their result compared to other candidates. They can show these to any future employer. More**

**Career development.** Career development. Taking part in the pilot was an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their commitment and enthusiasm for the law to employers and others. Furthermore, a number of leading law firms offered a limited number of career development opportunities for the best performing candidates, such as a training contract assessment day place, open day places, a work experience placement and career development coaching.

The firms that offered these opportunities are:

- Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner
- Browne Jacobson
- Fletchers Solicitors
- Mayer Brown
- Michelmores
- Mishcon de Reya
- Moore Barlow.

The best performing candidates will be contacted once they have received their results to provide them with further details and discuss the opportunities that may be available.

**Ex gratia payment.** Candidates that completed the entire pilot will receive £300. Candidates in the top 10 per cent will receive an additional £200.

**Help develop the SQE.** This was an opportunity to be directly involved in the development of the SQE and help shape the assessment for future solicitors of England and Wales.

**Please note:** Taking part in the pilot will not exempt candidates from any elements of the SQE once it comes into force. Candidates cannot qualify by doing the pilot.

## **Q10. Is the content of the assessments confidential?**

**Yes. Given the importance of the pilot, all candidates were asked to agree to a confidentiality agreement. More**

Candidates were not permitted to remove any materials from the test centre. They must also keep the content of the assessments confidential and not disclose or discuss any of the content with any other party.

## **Q11. What were candidates tested on?**

**The practice areas tested in the SQE2 pilot are: More**

- Criminal Practice
- Dispute Resolution
- Property Practice
- Wills and the Administration of Estates and Trusts
- Business Practice.

## **Assessments**

The legal skills assessments in the SQE2 pilot are:

- Legal research
- Legal writing
- Legal drafting
- Case and matter analysis
- Oral presentation/advocacy
- Client interview
- Attendance note/case analysis (linked to the client interview).

## **Legal Skills Assessments**

For the purposes of the pilot, candidates completed the seven legal skills assessments twice (ie they did a total of 14 assessments) as follows:

- seven assessments in a specialist practice area (the "specialisation"). Candidates were asked to choose between (1) business practice and (2) criminal practice. Candidates indicated their preference of specialisation in the application form and if they were prepared to sit in the other specialisation if their preferred option was not available
- seven assessments which range across the five practice areas (the "common core"), ie there was at least one assessment in each of the five practice areas. Advocacy/oral presentation in the common core could have been in dispute resolution or criminal practice.

To allow us to conduct the analysis of the pilot we were aiming to achieve a similar number of candidates to take each specialisation. We stated that if the specialisations were oversubscribed, preference would be given to those candidates that applied early, taking into account the need to achieve a broadly similar number of candidates for each specialist practice area.

Read more about the format of the [Legal Skills Assessments](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/pilot/sqe2-key-information/#LSA) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/pilot/sqe2-key-information/#LSA].

## **Single best answer multiple choice question test**

The SQE2 pilot also included a test of the Functioning Legal Knowledge comprising single best answer multiple choice questions. This test provided data to help inform and extend the analysis to be carried out following the SQE2 pilot.

Candidates needed to answer 120 single best answer multiple choice questions over two days, as follows:

**Candidates that completed the business specialisation.** These candidates completed the following multiple choice assessments:

- 10 December: 60 single best answer multiple choice questions sampling from all areas of the Functioning Legal Knowledge except:
  - Legal system of England and Wales, including Sources of law
  - Constitutional law and EU law including Human Rights Act 1998
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Legal Services
  - Solicitors Accounts.
- 11 December: 60 single best answer multiple choice questions sampling from business law and practice including taxation; money laundering and financial services; contract law and related questions on ethics.

**Candidates completed the criminal specialisation** These candidates completed the following multiple choice assessments:

- 10 December: 60 single best answer multiple choice questions sampling from all areas of the Functioning Legal Knowledge except:
  - Legal system of England and Wales, including Sources of Law
  - Constitutional law and EU law including Human Rights Act 1998
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Legal Services
  - Solicitors Accounts.
- 11 December: 60 single best answer multiple choice questions sampling from core principles of criminal liability, criminal litigation and related questions on ethics.

These single best answer multiple choice questions tested the candidates' ability to apply core legal principles and rules appropriately and effectively at the level of a newly qualified solicitor in practice; to realistic client-based and ethical problems and situations. Further detail was provided in the assessment specification for the pilot which was available in advance of the pilot. We informed candidates selected to sit the pilot when the assessment specification was available and provided a link to it by email.

Each of the questions on the single best answer multiple choice test was followed by five possible answers. Candidates were asked to choose the best answer from the stated alternatives. Candidates were asked to mark only one answer for each question. Multiple answers were not counted.

**Please note:** Using single best answer multiple choice questions in the pilot is for the purpose of enriching the pilot data for analysis. The proposed design of the actual SQE2 assessments does not include single best answer multiple choice questions tests.

### **Q12. Were materials provided?**

**No materials were provided for the single best answer multiple choice test. More**

For the specialisation in the legal skills assessments, candidates were provided with materials a day one solicitor would usually look up. For the common core in the legal skills assessments, candidates were provided with core materials. Any other materials, such as books and notes, were not permitted to be brought into or used during the pilot assessments.

### **Q13. What were the Legal Skills Assessments?**

**Legal research. The legal research exercise required candidates to investigate a problem for a client. Candidates were given an email from a partner which asked candidates to research an issue or issues, so that the partner could report back to the client. More**

They were asked to explain to the partner their legal reasoning and the key sources they relied on. They did not need to produce a research trail. Candidates were provided with the sources for the legal research exercise: these include both primary and secondary sources. Some of the sources provided may not have been relevant. Candidates were given 60 minutes to complete the exercise.

**Legal writing.** Candidates were asked to write a letter or an email as the solicitor acting in a matter. Candidates were given 30 minutes to complete the exercise.

**Legal drafting.** Candidates were asked to draft a legal document or parts of a legal document. This may have taken the form of drafting from a precedent or amending a document already drafted, but it may also have involved drafting without either of these. Candidates were given 45 minutes to complete the exercise.

**Case and matter analysis.** Candidates worked with a case or transaction. Candidates reported in writing to a partner on the case, giving a legal analysis as requested and suggesting options and strategies as appropriate including as part of a negotiation. Candidates were given 60 minutes to complete the exercise.

Oral presentation/advocacy. Candidates were given a separate case study on which they conducted a piece of advocacy/make an oral presentation. An email asked the candidate to conduct the advocacy/make the presentation and told them before whom this will be made. Where relevant, candidates were also given a file of documents. Candidates were given 45 minutes to prepare and 15 minutes to make their presentation.

**Client interview.** Candidates were given an email from a partner or a secretary indicating who the client is and something about what the client has come to discuss. The email may have been accompanied by documents. Candidates were given 10 minutes to consider the email and/or documents. They then had up to 25 minutes to conduct the interview with the client.

**Attendance note/case analysis (linked to the client interview).** Following the client interview (above), candidates were given 25 minutes to write by hand an attendance note/case analysis of the interview they have just completed.

#### **Q14. How could candidates prepare for the pilot?**

**A detailed assessment specification which sets out what will be assessed, and to what standard in the legal skills part of the assessment, was available in advance of the pilot More**

We told candidates that were selected to sit the pilot when the assessment specification was available and provided them with a link to it.

#### **Q15. Did candidates receive travel expenses?**

**The oral and written assessments on 13-15 December only took place in London. More**



We therefore made a contribution towards reasonable travel expenses for candidates that were eligible. The contribution was up to a maximum of £150 in total, per eligible candidate, to attend these oral and written assessments in London. To be eligible, candidates must have:

- started their journey more than 40 miles from the assessment venue they were allocated
- used standard class travel
- completed an expense form which we provided
- submitted valid receipts
- attended and completed all of the pilot assessments.

No contribution towards travel expenses was made for candidates to attend the computer-based assessments on 10 and 11 December.

### **Further information**

If you have a question, please [get in touch \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/).