

# FAQs for qualifying under the LPC route

Updated 25 October 2023

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

## I want to qualify as a solicitor

### [How do I qualify as a solicitor?](#)

Please read our [Pathways to qualification](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/].

## Academic stage of education and training

### [What is the academic stage of training?](#)

It is the first stage to qualifying as a solicitor of England and Wales under the LPC route.

It is achieved by completing a qualifying law degree or the Common Professional Examination/Post Graduate Diploma in Law sometimes known as a conversion course.

## Common Professional Examination (CPE)

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### [Can we make alternative arrangements for assessments or cancel assessments on these courses in the event of further local or national Government restrictions?](#)

We do not specify or approve the form that assessments take on these courses. However, some form of assessment of the Foundation of Legal Knowledge (FLK) subjects is required, for example online, open book or remote assessments. By the time your students graduate, they must be properly assessed in all FLK subjects.

Training providers should tell us if they are introducing alternative assessment arrangements in the event of further local or national



Government restrictions (for our information, not approval).

### **What is the Common Professional Examination (CPE)?**

It is a conversion course that completes the academic stage of training under the old system for people who did not hold a qualifying law degree.

It was also for individuals who have work experience or academic/vocational qualifications that we consider to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree.

It is sometimes called a conversion course or Graduate Diploma in Law.

### **I have a law degree which is not a QLD. Can I apply for exemptions from the CPE?**

Since the introduction of the SQE, candidates are no longer granted full or partial exemptions from the CPE. Those who would have been eligible will no longer be able to qualify under the existing arrangements, unless they fall under the transitional arrangements because they have accepted an offer to start the LPC or a PRT. If so, they should contact us.

### **What is the difference between a CPE and a Graduate Diploma in Law?**

The CPE is the title given by the regulatory bodies, and is the professional name of the course.

However, organisations are permitted to embed this within their academic award frameworks by giving it an academic title. Many organisations choose to use the title Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), but this is a discretionary decision for each organisation.

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### **How do I know who is approved to provide a CPE?**

View a list of recognised providers:



[CPE/GDL course providers \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/cpe-gdl-course-providers/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/qualifying-law-degree-common-professional-examination/cpe-gdl-course-providers/).

## Legal Practice Course (LPC)

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### **What is the Legal Practice Course (LPC)?**

The LPC is a practice-focused course which builds on student's academic knowledge of the law and prepares them for their period of recognised training and early years in practice.

### **How do I know who is approved to provide the LPC?**

View a list of recognised providers:

[Legal Practice Course \(LPC\) providers \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/lpc-course-providers/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/lpc/lpc-course-providers/).

### **Do I need to inform the SRA that I intend to become a solicitor before I commence the LPC?**

No, there is no requirement to contact us before commencing the LPC.

If you know that you have a character and suitability issue, or are unsure as to whether you may have an issue, you can choose to submit an early disclosure before completing the Legal Practice Course. The fee for an early assessment is £100.

Further information can be found in our Student information pack.

### **I was previously refused student enrolment. Can I commence the LPC now?**

You can, but we will need to consider your character and suitability when you apply for admission to the roll.

You can apply to us for an early assessment of your character and suitability at any time before you apply for admission, using our [Character and Suitability form \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/character-and-suitability/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/character-and-suitability/).

### **Can I have any exemptions from the LPC?**

If you meet the criteria you can apply for exemptions.



Your course provider will be able to advise if you are eligible for partial exemptions.

If you think you may be eligible for a full exemption from either all of stage 1 or stage 2 or both, you can apply to us.

You must be able to demonstrate how you have met the course outcomes. More details can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/).

The fee for this application is £600.

[Exemptions from certain elements of the LPC are currently allowed for BVC and BPTC graduates. \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/)

### **I am enrolled on the LPC. Can I start my period of recognised training?**

Yes, you can commence your period of recognised training while you are completing the LPC.

Your training principal would notify us by completing a Training Notification.

The fee for this application is £100.

Further information can be found in our Authorised training provider information pack.

## **Professional Skills Course (PSC)**

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### **What is the Professional Skills Course (PSC)?**

### **The PSC builds on the knowledge and skills acquired during the Legal Practice Course (LPC). More**

It consists of three compulsory subject areas and electives. Further information can be found in our [Professional Skills Course information pack \[https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/professional-skills-course/professional-skills-course-information-pack/\]](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/professional-skills-course/professional-skills-course-information-pack/).

## **Do I need to complete the PSC before I finish my period of recognised training?**

**If you commence a period of recognised training, the PSC would normally be completed during the period of recognised training** [More](#)

If this does not happen, the training would not have to be extended but you would be unable to apply for admission until the PSC was completed.

## **Who pays for the PSC?**

**The training provider pays for a trainee's first attempt and expenses,** [More](#)

as set out in regulation 3.1(b) of the [SRA Education, Training and Assessment Provider Regulations 2019](https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/#reg-3) [<https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/#reg-3>].

## **Can I have any exemptions from the PSC?**

**You may be granted exemptions from one or more of the core elements if you have the relevant experience and/or training which covers the same ground as the PSC's Written Standards.** [More](#)

The PSC is designed to build on the Legal Practice Course (LPC), so completion of the LPC cannot be used as a basis to apply for exemptions from the core elements of the PSC.

If you wish to seek exemption you must submit an [Equivalent Means - Professional Skills Course \(not CILEX\)](https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-psc.docx) [<https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-psc.docx>] application.

The fee is £210.

Those not required to enter into a period of recognised training, for example Chartered Legal Executives and Justices' Clerks' Assistants, are automatically exempt from the electives.

# **Vocational stage of education and training**

## **What is the vocational stage of training?**

It is the second of the two stages to qualifying as a solicitor under the LPC route.



The first is the academic stage and the second is the vocational stage.

The vocational stage is achieved by completion of the Legal Practice Course (LPC), a period of recognised training and the Professional Skills Course (PSC).

## **Student character and suitability**

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### **What is a character and suitability issue?**

Details can be found in our **Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules** [<https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>] .

It is important that you disclose any character and suitability issues when you apply for admission to the roll.

You should also tell us about any issues that may arise afterwards, before we make our decision.

Failure to do so could affect your admission as a solicitor of England and Wales.

### **When do I need to disclose a character and suitability issue?**

When you apply for admission to the roll of solicitors.

To have your character and suitability assessed early, at any time before you apply for admission. You will need to complete and Assessment of your **Character and Suitability** [<https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/character-and-suitability/>] .

Further information can be found in our **Student information pack** [<https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/resources/student-information/>] .

You should also tell us about any issues that may arise afterwards, before we make our decision.

## **Student reasonable adjustments**

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## **What should I do if I need a reasonable adjustment from my course provider?**

### **If you are a law student who needs a reasonable adjustment to help you with your course, you should approach the course provider. More**

Under the Equality Act 2010 course providers have a duty to make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled students. If you are a disabled student and need reasonable adjustments, then you will need to discuss these requirements with your course provider.

If you cannot agree on the reasonable adjustment with your course provider, you may be able to take further action to pursue your request.

## **What if a course provider will not make the adjustment?**

### **You have a number of options available if a course provider does not agree to make the reasonable adjustments. More**

You can:

- follow the provider's internal complaints procedures
- apply to the [Office of the Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/) [<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>]
- consider an action for unlawful discrimination in the courts.

## **Can the SRA help me with a dispute with a course provider?**

### **We will not usually get involved in a dispute between a student and a course provider. More**

Where an LPC provider shows repeated or systematic breaches of the Equality Act we may reconsider the arrangements for authorisation.

QLD (Qualifying Law Degree) and CPD (Common professional Examination) qualifications are overseen by the [QAA \(Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk) [<https://www.qaa.ac.uk>].

## **What checks do the SRA make before authorising a course provider?**

### **We authorise organisations to provide the LPC. More**

Before we authorise them, we ask the provider to let us know:



- its equal opportunities statement/policy
- details of its approach to the promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity for students and potential students with regard to all dimensions of diversity
- its approach to identifying the needs of students with disabilities
- the resources in place to support students with disabilities
- how any statutory duties to students with disabilities will be monitored and fulfilled.

## **Trainee character and suitability**

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### **What is a character and suitability issue?**

#### **Details can be found in More**

our [SRA Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules 2019](#) [<https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>].

### **What will happen if my application is refused?**

#### **Our decision on your early assessment of character and suitability is not binding. More**

However, providing you have no other issues to disclose, we usually uphold this decision when you apply for admission.

### **Do I have to inform my training principal of any character and suitability issues?**

#### **You are advised to inform your training principal. More**

You may wish to do an early assessment and complete an Assessment of your [Character and Suitability](#) [<https://update.sra.org.uk/trainees/period-recognised-training/character-and-suitability/>].

## **Period of recognised training**

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### **What is a period of recognised training?**

**A period of recognised training is structured, work based learning which forms part of the vocational stage in the route to qualifying as a solicitor. More**





It is closely supervised and is usually for a period of two years if undertaken on a full time basis.

A trainee is required to gain experience in at least three distinct areas of English and Welsh law and practice if they commenced their training under the SRA Training Regulations 2014 - Qualification and Provider Regulations.

There is no requirement for three distinct areas of law if the trainee commenced their training from 25 November 2019, under the [Authorisation of Individuals Regulations](https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/]. The training must still meet the practice skills standards so a varied workload is still expected.

A [training record](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/period-recognised-training/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/period-recognised-training/] must be kept throughout the training.

### **When can I start a period of recognised training?**

**You would normally start a period of recognised training after completion of the Legal Practice Course (LPC). More**

It is also possible to complete your training while studying the LPC.

### **Can I reduce the length of my period of recognised training?**

**Possibly, if you have worked in a legal environment and gained equivalent experience in the three years before starting training. More**

Your organisation can, at its discretion, recognise relevant prior experience and take this time into account to reduce the period of training.

The time can be recognised on a like-for like basis up to a maximum period of six months (183 calendar days).

### **Can I complete a period of recognised training on a part time basis?**



**Yes, the total length of the period of recognised training would depend on the usual number of days worked each week (not including overtime or weekend work). More**

A full-time training period, in which you work five days per week, is for two years (730 calendar days, or 522 working days).

So, as a guide, if you work:

- two and a half days per week, the period is four years (1,460 calendar days)
- three days per week, the period is three years and four months (1,216 calendar days)
- four days per week, the period is two years and six months (913 calendar days)

Further information can be found in our [Authorised training provider information pack](https://update.sra.org.uk/trainees/resources/authorised-training-provider-information-pack) [https://update.sra.org.uk/trainees/resources/authorised-training-provider-information-pack].

**How much holiday and sickness leave am I allowed during the period of recognised training?**

**This should be agreed between you and your employer. It should be included in the terms and conditions of your employment. More**

**Can my period of recognised training be terminated?**

**A period of recognised training is an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship can only be brought to an end if certain criteria are met. More**

Further information can be found in our [Authorised training provider information pack](https://update.sra.org.uk/trainees/resources/authorised-training-provider-information-pack) [https://update.sra.org.uk/trainees/resources/authorised-training-provider-information-pack].

**What happens if my training provider cannot offer three areas of law?**

**If you commenced a period of recognised training under the SRA Training Regulations 2014, between 1 July 2014 and 24 November 2019, More**



and your training provider cannot provide you with experience in three separate areas of English and Welsh law and practice, or experience in the range of work required by the Practice Skills Standards, they must arrange for you to be seconded. During your secondment you must be:

- adequately supervised
- appraised regularly
- given training in English and Welsh law and practice.

Secondments do not have to be approved by us.

There is no requirement for three distinct areas of law if the trainee commenced their training from 25 November 2019, under the [Authorisation of Individuals Regulations](https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/]. The training must still meet the practice skills standards so a varied workload is still expected.

### **I am a Chartered Legal Executive. Am I exempt from a period of recognised training?**

#### **You may be exempt from a period of training if you have: [More](#)**

- satisfied the requirements of the academic stage through study or exemptions granted
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- been engaged as a Chartered Legal Executive in the practice of law.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). The mandatory elements of the PSC must be completed prior to applying for admission to the roll.

When you apply to be admitted as a solicitor you will need to provide us with evidence of your qualification as a Chartered Legal Executive.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

### **I am an Assistant Justices' Clerk. Am I exempt from a period of recognised training?**

#### **You may be exempt from a period of training if you have: [More](#)**

- completed the academic stage
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)



- before attending the LPC, you have served for at least five years out of the last 10 years in the Magistrates' Courts Service as an Assistant Justices' Clerk.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). The mandatory elements of the PSC must be completed prior to applying for admission to the roll.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

### **I have worked as a paralegal. Can I be exempt from a period of recognised training?**

### **It is possible to be exempt from a period of recognised training. More**

You need to demonstrate you have achieved the outcomes that would have been gained by completing a period of recognised training.

We call this 'Equivalent Means'.

To apply for the exemption you must submit an [Equivalent Means - Period of Recognised Training](https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-recognised-training.docx) [https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-recognised-training.docx] application.

The fee is £600.

Chartered Legal Executives and Assistant Justices' Clerks may automatically be exempt from a period of recognised training.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

## **Equivalent means**

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### **What is Equivalent Means?**

### **SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations 2019 allows us to recognise some assessed learning and supervised work based learning as 'Equivalent Means'. More**

To be admitted as a solicitor you must have completed:



- the academic stage, and
- the vocational stage.

Applications for exemptions from any of the stages must be made on the relevant Equivalent Means form

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

### **I have worked as a paralegal. Can I be exempt from a period of recognised training?**

#### **It is possible to be exempt from a period of recognised training. More**

You need to demonstrate you have achieved the outcomes that would have been gained by completing a period of recognised training.

We call this 'Equivalent Means'.

To apply for the exemption you must submit an [Equivalent Means - Period of Recognised Training application](https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-recognised-training.docx) [https://update.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/application-form-equivalent-means-recognised-training.docx].

The fee is £600.

Chartered Legal Executives and Assistant Justices' Clerks may automatically be exempt from a period of recognised training.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

### **I am a Chartered Legal Executive. Am I exempt from a period of recognised training?**

#### **You may be exempt from a period of training if you have: More**

- satisfied the requirements of the academic stage through study or exemptions granted
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- been engaged as a Chartered Legal Executive in the practice of law.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). The mandatory elements of the PSC must be completed prior to applying for admission to the roll.



When you apply to be admitted as a solicitor you will need to provide us with evidence of your qualification as a Chartered Legal Executive.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].

### **I am an Assistant Justices' Clerk. Am I exempt from a period of recognised training?**

#### **You may be exempt from a period of training if you have: More**

- completed the academic stage
- completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- before attending the LPC, you have served for at least five years out of the last 10 years in the Magistrates' Courts Service as an Assistant Justices' Clerk.

You are automatically exempt from the elective elements of the Professional Skills Course (PSC). The mandatory elements of the PSC must be completed prior to applying for admission to the roll.

Further information can be found in our [Equivalent Means guidance](https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/) [https://update.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/equivalent-means-information-pack/].