

Education and training authorisation and monitoring activity September 2019 - August 2020

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[\[https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/authorisation-and-monitoring-report-2019-20.pdf\]](https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/authorisation-and-monitoring-report-2019-20.pdf)

Introduction and overview of 2019-20

We have a statutory responsibility for the education and training of solicitors, as set out in the Solicitors Act 1974 and the Legal Services Act 2007. Education and training requirements are a key regulatory tool to protect consumers of legal services. The purpose of this report is to tell our stakeholders about the outcomes of our quality assurance activity in relation to education and training. Unless otherwise stated, it relates to the period 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020.

We introduced the new [Solicitors Qualifying Examination \(SQE\)](#) [\[https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/\]](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/) on 1 September 2021. This is a single, rigorous assessment for all aspiring solicitors. The SQE means that everyone who becomes a solicitor will meet the same high standards in a consistent way.

Ahead of the SQE, in November 2019 we introduced transition regulations allowing anyone who was already studying or training when we introduced the SQE, to continue to qualify through the previous system, now called the Legal Practice Course (LPC) route. This means someone who has a qualifying law degree (QLD) or the Common Professional Examination (CPE) ¹, an LPC and a period of recognised training. These regulations mean that there will be people qualifying through the LPC route for some years (until 2032). However, we expect most LPC courses to start to end over the next few years.

We have arrangements in place for the orderly closure of LPC courses. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor and report on both the LPC courses and route for as long as the numbers qualifying remain high enough to do so. We know that we must remain vigilant to the risks to quality and standards as these courses come to an end and are replaced by the SQE.

We asked LPC providers to start collecting socio-economic information in April 2019. This information will help improve our reporting on the LPC

and help inform the baseline of our evaluation work for the SQE.

This report covers the first five months of the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2020, shortly after the introduction of Government restrictions on contact and movement, we decided to relax some of our requirements for the teaching and assessment of the QLD, CPE and the LPC.

For the QLD and the CPE, we do not specify the form that the assessments take, and so we left it to providers to make change to assessment arrangements. However, we did require that some form of assessment must be taken.

Our Board decided that temporarily during the pandemic, we should relax our assessment requirements for all parts of the LPC. This meant that for skills assessments and elective subjects, where we usually require an exam but not necessarily under supervised conditions, we allowed alternative arrangements, for example, assessment using coursework.

For the core subjects, to protect the integrity and security of assessments, we kept our requirements for supervised assessment but permitted online or remote proctoring of these assessments. LPC providers then applied to us for temporary approval of changes to their teaching and assessment arrangements.

We required all providers to explain how they would maintain the integrity and security of all LPC assessments undertaken remotely. We only approved remote assessment where we were confident that the proposed arrangements would make sure that they would be robustly supervised. For example, the remote proctoring software used recorded assessments in full and flagged any potential issues for immediate review. We are therefore satisfied with the arrangements put in place by providers to assess the LPC during this period.

We considered 55 applications from LPC providers to change their teaching and assessment arrangements in response to the pandemic. These included changes to how they taught and assessed electives, skills and core practice areas.

The LPC comprises of two stages: Stage 1, covering core practice areas and skills and Stage 2 covering three vocational electives. All LPC providers applied for approval of alternative assessments for Stage 2 electives and skills. Only 85% of LPC providers applied for and were approved to administer Stage 1 supervised assessments via remote proctoring. The remainder continued to assess traditionally.