



Solicitors Qualifying Examination Report on Apprentice Performance

17 October 2025

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Executive Summary

This report provides headline analyses of the cohort characteristics and performance of solicitor apprentice candidates in the seven SQE1 assessments from November 2021 to January 2025, and in the eleven SQE2 assessments from April 2022 to April 2025.

Overall 5.5% of SQE1 candidates and 6.3% of SQE2 candidates taking assessments as first attempts have been apprentices during this reporting period.

There are some differences in the characteristics and performance of apprentice candidates and non-apprentice candidates:

- In both SQE1 and SQE2 cohorts overall, apprentice candidates are more likely than non-apprentice candidates to come from lower socio-economic groups and are also more likely to report having white ethnicity and to be of female sex.
- In both SQE1 and SQE2 cohorts overall, apprentice candidates achieve higher scores and higher pass rates than non-apprentice candidates, with the differential in attainment being more marked in SQE2.

The majority of apprentices in SQE1 and SQE2 cohorts to date have been graduate apprentices. Characteristics of graduate apprentices compared with non-graduate apprentices are fairly similar and there are no overall significant differences in performance between these two types of apprenticeship cohorts to date.

Introduction

Solicitor apprenticeships in England offer routes to qualify as a solicitor by combining formal education with on-the-job training. This enables candidates to attain legal qualifications and relevant work experience alongside the knowledge and skills required to pass the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). By working at a law firm and studying for the SQE with the apprentice levy and employers covering tuition costs, apprentices avoid the normal costs associated with university education and training. Apprenticeships may therefore appeal to a diverse group of candidates including those from less well represented socio-economic groups. Two main apprenticeship routes exist: graduate apprenticeships for candidates who have already attained a degree (usually lasting two or three years), and Level 7 (non-graduate) apprenticeships for post A-level students (usually lasting about six years).

This report sets out attendance and performance data (mean scaled scores and pass rates) from FLK1 and FLK2 assessments separately, and then for SQE2 assessments. The analyses also include data collected in the monitoring and maximising diversity survey which candidates complete when registering for an SQE assessment.

Data identifying the apprentice candidates are provided by training providers for each SQE assessment. Prior to July 2023 training providers simply provided a list of their apprentice candidates but no further information was requested e.g. on apprenticeship type or duration. Additional data fields on whether apprentices were graduates or non-graduates, and the duration of their apprenticeship programme were requested for all subsequent assessments (and retrospectively where possible), but there are varying degrees of incomplete data in these additional fields - especially from the earlier assessments.

All analyses are based on first attempt candidate data: data from resitting candidates is excluded. Data are included from 24,561 candidates who took FLK1 and 24,385 candidates who took FLK2 assessments as a first attempt, and from 11,870 candidates who took SQE2 assessments as a first attempt.

Analyses by socio-economic status (SES) excludes candidates who report having attended school outside of the UK or who answered “don’t know”, “prefer not to say”, “other” or declined to answer any of the questions used to construct the SES rank metric (see appendix for further details of this metric). The reduced datasets for these analyses include 11,705 FLK1 candidates, 11,655 FLK2 candidates and 6,636 SQE2 candidates.

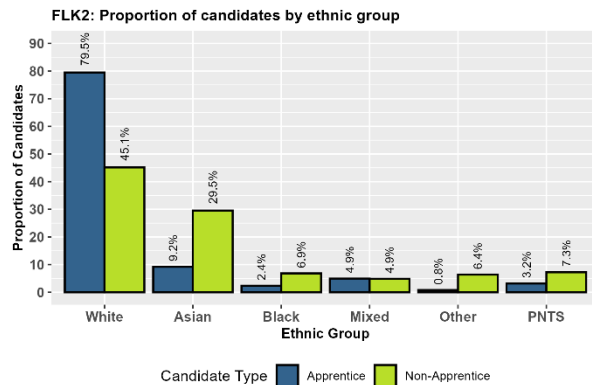
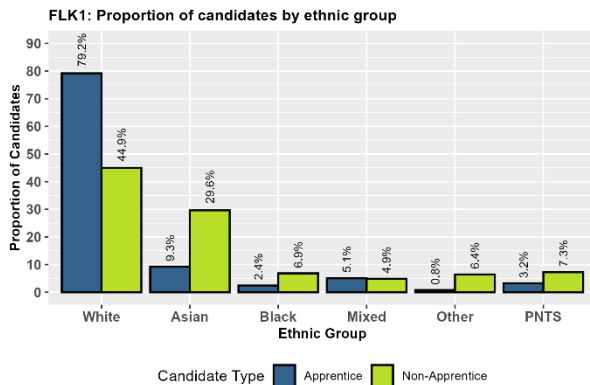
In line with other published reports, performance data are suppressed for groups with fewer than 10 candidates (rows in grey) – but these candidates’ data are included in aggregated data.

SQE1 - Apprentices vs Non-Apprentices - Candidate Characteristics

Overall, apprentices taking SQE1 assessments as a first attempt account for 5.5% of FLK1 and 5.6% of FLK2 cohorts. The proportion of apprentices ranged from 2.6% (for both FLK1 and FLK2) in November 2021 to 7.3% and 7.4% in FLK1 and FLK2 respectively in July 2023. This section compares the characteristics of apprentices with non-apprentice candidates in the aggregated FLK1 and FLK2 cohorts.

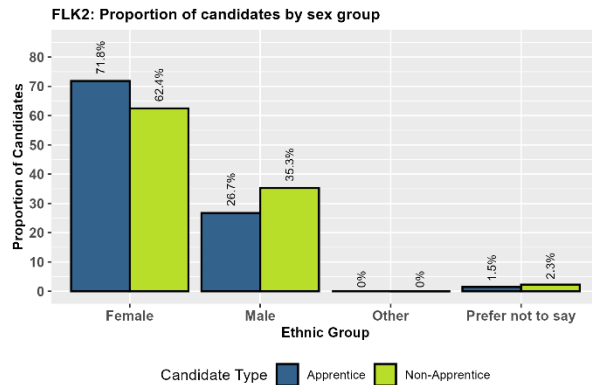
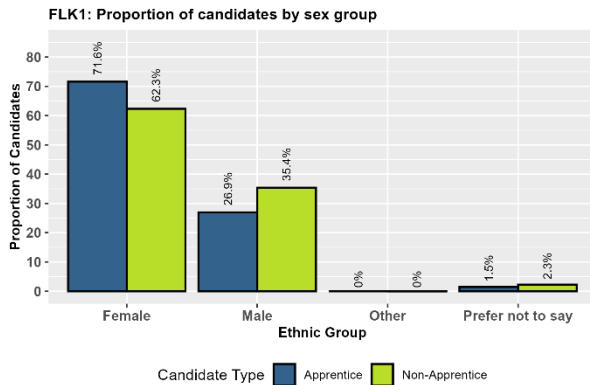
Ethnicity

Apprentice candidates are more likely to be of white ethnicity compared to non-apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall: almost 80% of apprentice candidates are of white ethnicity compared with 45% of non-apprentice candidates.



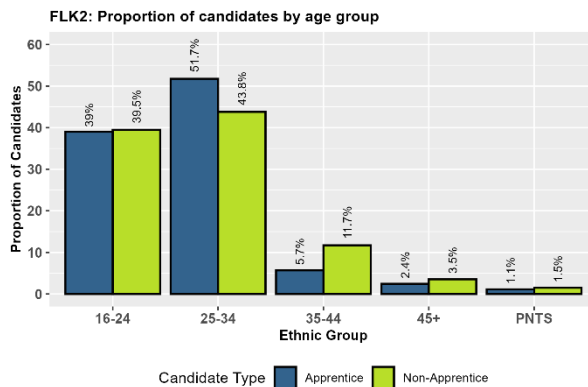
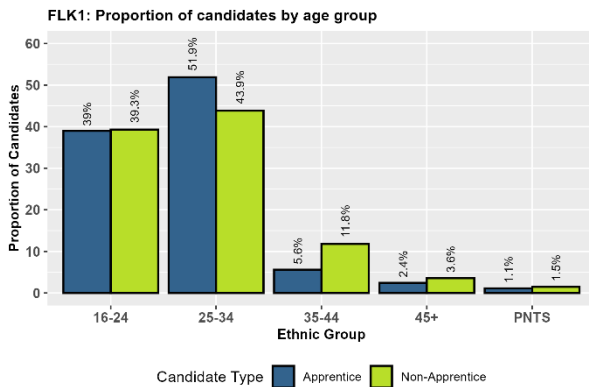
Sex

Apprentice candidates are more likely to be female compared to non-apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall: 72% of apprentice candidates are female compared with 62% of non-apprentice candidates.



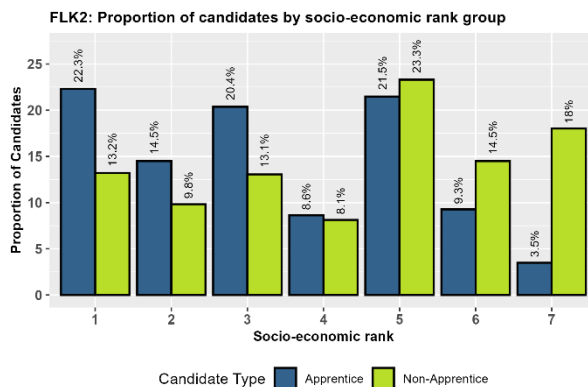
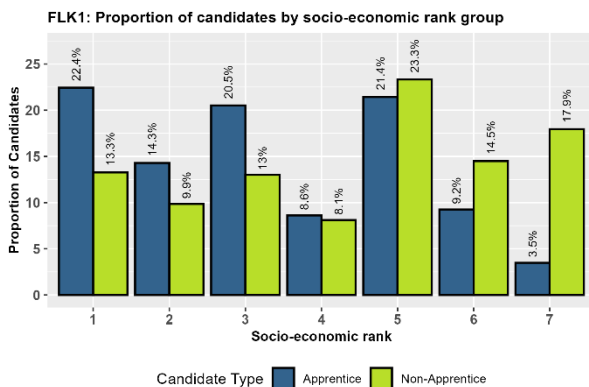
Age

The age profile of apprentice candidates is slightly younger but not too dissimilar to non-apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall: 91% of apprentice candidates are in the 16-24 or 25-34 age groups compared with 82-83% of non-apprentice candidates.



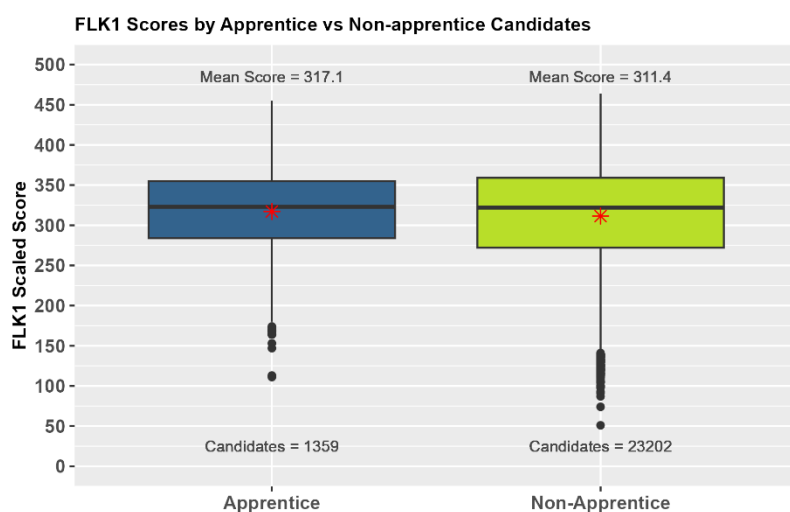
Socio-economic rank

Apprentice candidates are more likely to come from lower socio-economic rank groups compared to non-apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall: 57% of apprentice candidates are in the lowest three SE rank groups (groups 1, 2 and 3) compared with 36% of non-apprentice candidates.



SQE1 - Apprentices vs Non-Apprentices - Performance

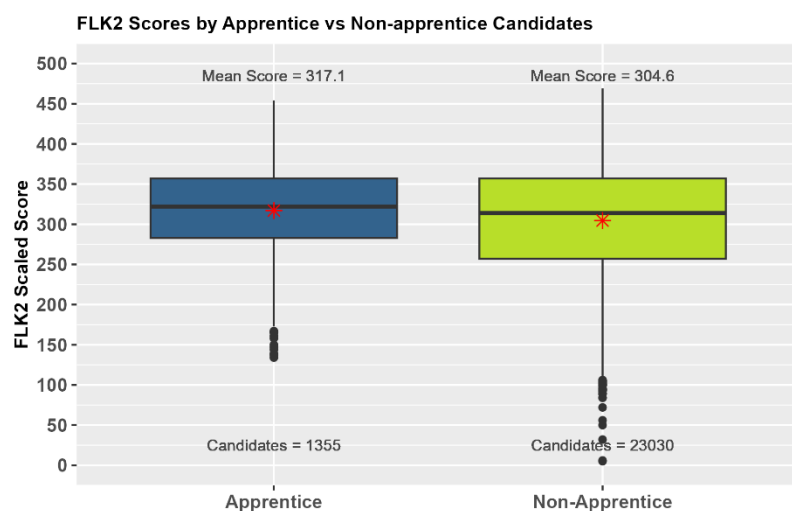
FLK1: The boxplots below show the score distributions of apprentice and non-apprentice candidates taking FLK1 assessments as a first attempt in the reporting period.



Overall, apprentice candidates to date have scored significantly higher and achieved significantly higher pass rates in FLK1 than non-apprentice candidates. However, this has not been the case in all assessments – in the November 2021, January 2023 and January 2025 FLK1 cohorts, apprentice candidates scored higher (though not significantly so) than non-apprentice candidates – whereas in the January 2024 cohort, apprentice candidates scored slightly lower (though not significantly so) than non-apprentice candidates.

FLK1 Assessment	Full Cohort			Apprentices			Non-Apprentices			T-tests for differences in mean scores: apprentices v non-apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: apprentices v non-apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	t	p-value	X2	p-value
All Candidates	24561	311.7	64.6	1359	317.1	68.1	23202	311.4	64.4	3.86	<0.001	7.55	0.006
FLK1_Nov2021	1074	318.0	67.4	28	341.5	89.3	1046	317.3	66.8	2.00	0.055	5.28	0.022
FLK1_Jul2022	1793	314.1	66.5	89	336	80.9	1704	313	65.8	4.25	<0.001	8.01	0.005
FLK1_Jan2023	2845	305.0	61.7	121	307.7	62	2724	304.9	61.6	0.61	0.540	0.00	1.000
FLK1_Jul2023	3028	315.7	68.5	220	322.6	70.9	2808	315.1	68.3	2.16	0.031	0.54	0.462
FLK1_Jan2024	5602	314.2	66.5	228	311.2	63.2	5374	314.3	66.6	-0.88	0.381	1.01	0.314
FLK1_Jul2024	4211	300	57.4	293	307.9	61.1	3918	299.4	57.1	2.50	0.013	1.62	0.203
FLK1_Jan2025	6008	317	66.5	380	321.4	72.4	5628	316.7	66.1	1.69	0.091	6.07	0.014

FLK2: The boxplots below show the score distributions of apprentices and non-apprentice candidates taking FLK2 assessments as a first attempt in the reporting period.

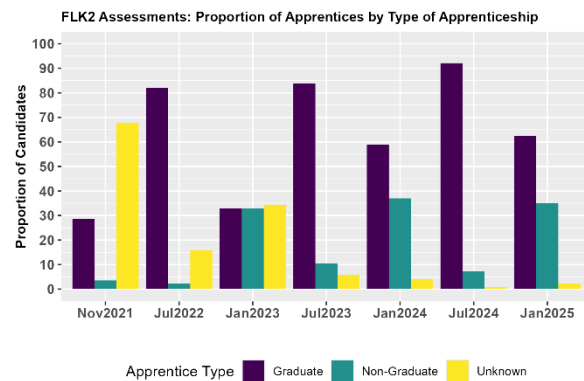
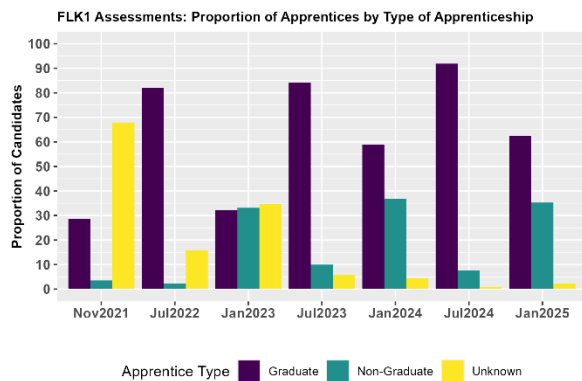


Overall, apprentice candidates to date have scored significantly higher and achieved significantly higher pass rates in FLK2 than non-apprentice candidates. Apprentices taking FLK2 achieved higher scores than non-apprentices in all FLK2 assessments – significantly so in all but the January 2024 assessment.

FLK2 Assessment	Full Cohort			Apprentices			Non-Apprentices			T-tests for differences in mean scores: apprentices v non-apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: apprentices v non-apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	t	p-value	X2	p-value
All Candidates	24385	305.3	60	1355	317.1	68	23030	304.6	59.5	7.88	<0.001	37.66	<0.001
FLK2_Nov2021	1075	299.2	54.5	28	339.2	82.1	1047	298.1	53.8	3.11	0.004	7.75	0.005
FLK2_Jul2022	1770	303.5	58.6	89	331	75.3	1681	302	57.7	4.89	<0.001	10.05	0.002
FLK2_Jan2023	2838	302.2	58.5	122	312.1	61.5	2716	301.7	58.4	2.19	0.030	0.35	0.555
FLK2_Jul2023	3008	301.5	59.9	222	317.4	73	2786	300.2	58.8	4.59	<0.001	16.54	<0.001
FLK2_Jan2024	5564	310.9	63.7	224	313.9	66.1	5340	310.8	63.6	0.84	0.401	0.48	0.490
FLK2_Jul2024	4164	292.1	52.6	293	308.9	61.8	3871	290.8	51.9	4.99	<0.001	10.26	0.001
FLK2_Jan2025	5966	314.2	63.9	377	321.7	70.3	5589	313.7	63.5	2.63	0.009	6.81	0.009

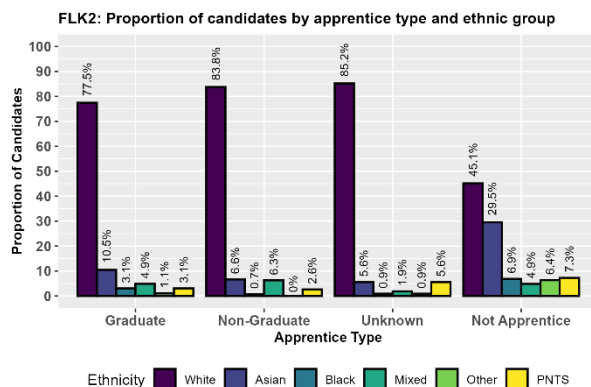
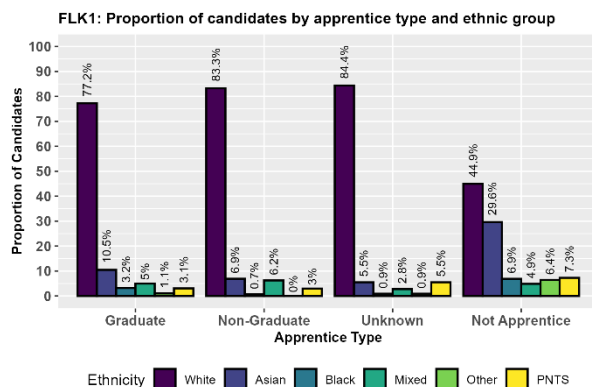
SQE1 – Graduate Apprentices vs Non-Graduate Apprentices – Candidate Characteristics

Data on the type of apprenticeships (graduate or non-graduate) show that the majority of apprentices in the SQE1 cohorts to date have been graduate apprentices (noting the varying degrees of missing data on this metric especially in the early SQE1 cohorts). However, as can be seen in the barplots below, there appears to be an emerging trend in a higher proportion of non-graduate apprentices sitting the January SQE1 assessments. It is expected that these proportions will continue to change as more non-graduate apprentices come through the system.



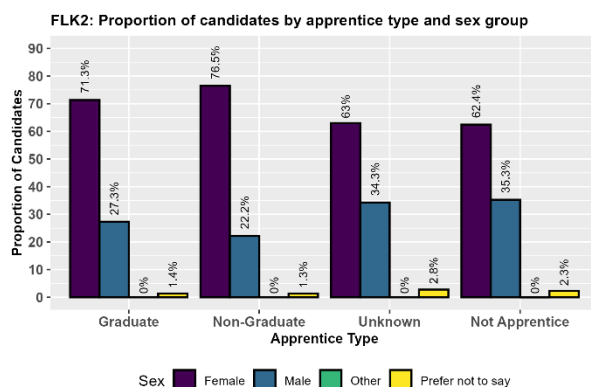
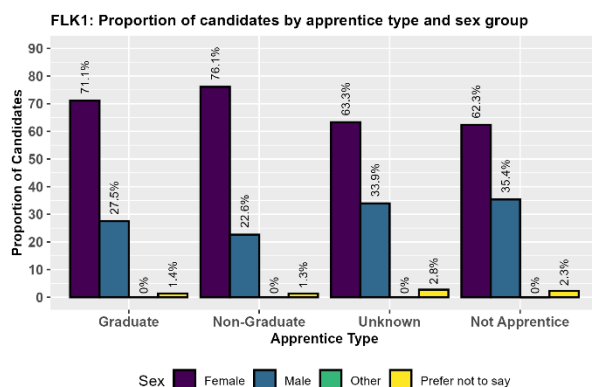
Ethnicity

Non-graduate apprentice candidates are slightly more likely to be of white ethnicity compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall.



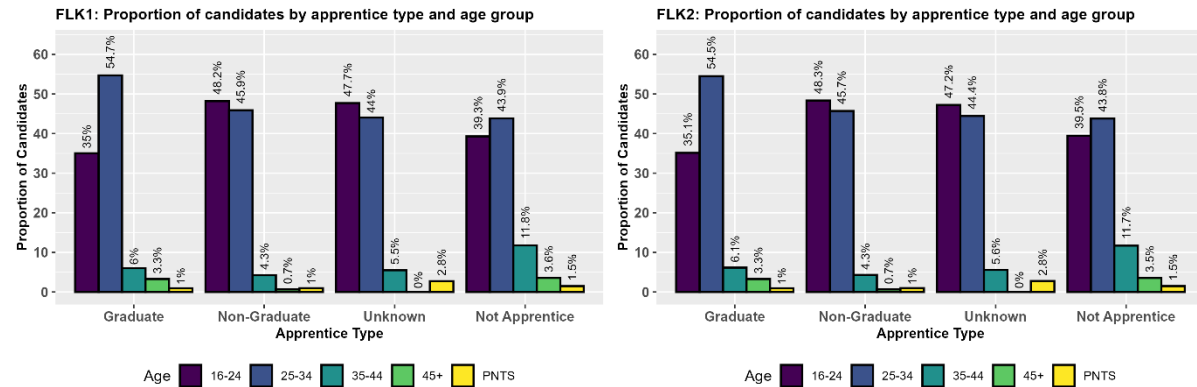
Sex

Non-graduate apprentice candidates are slightly more likely to be female compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall.



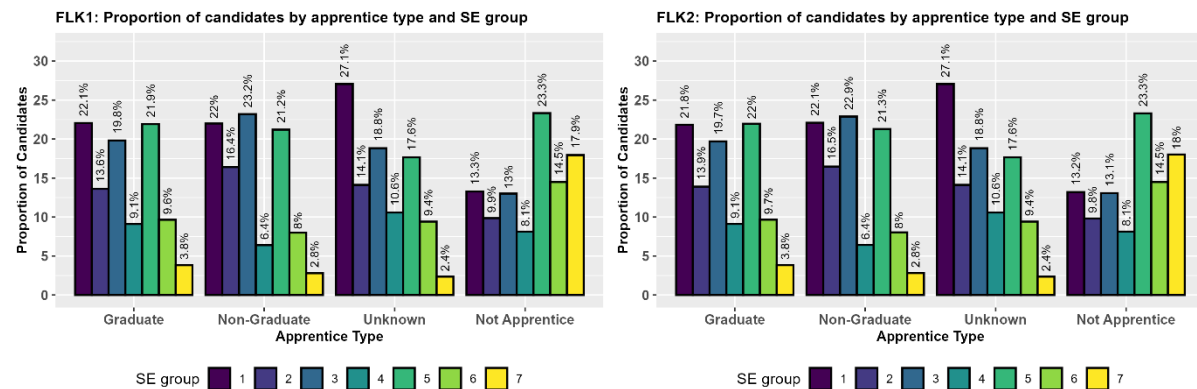
Age

The age profile of non-graduate apprentice candidates is younger than that of graduate apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall, as would be expected.



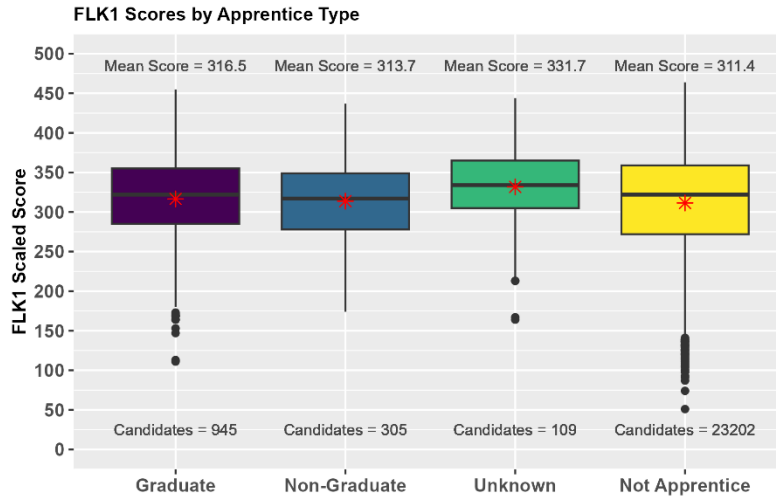
Socio-economic rank

Non-graduate apprentices are slightly more likely to come from lower socio-economic rank groups compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE1 cohorts overall: 55% of graduate apprentice candidates are in the lowest three SE rank groups compared with 62% of non-graduate apprentice candidates.



SQE1 – Graduate Apprentices vs Non-Graduate Apprentices - Performance

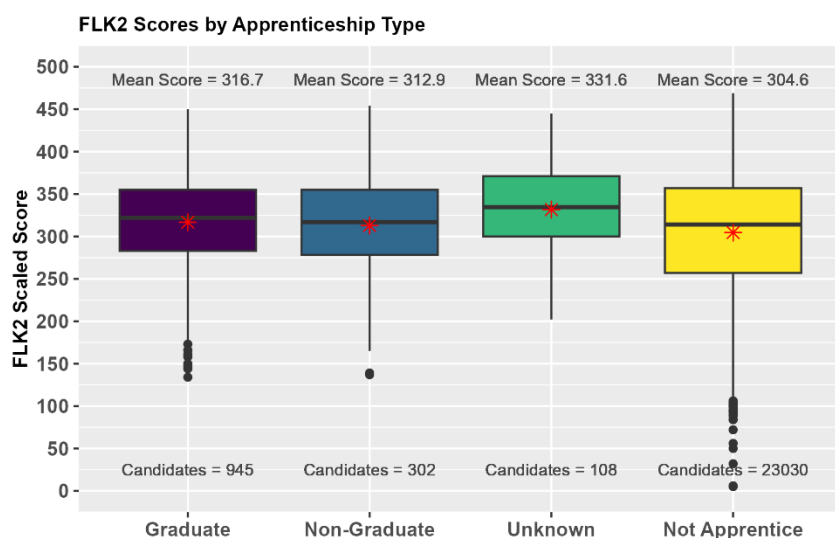
FLK1: The boxplots below show the score distributions for apprentice candidates grouped by recorded apprenticeship type (including where the apprenticeship type is unknown) and for all non-apprentice candidates taking FLK1 a first attempt in the reporting period.



Overall, there are no differences in scores or pass rate between graduate apprentices and non-graduate apprentices in FLK1 assessments. Graduate apprentices performed better than non-graduate apprentices in the January 2023 and July 2024 cohorts, but the opposite effect was observed in the January 2025 cohort.

FLK1 Assessment	Graduate Apprentices			Non-Graduate Apprentices			Unknown Apprenticeship Type			T-tests for differences in mean scores: graduate v non-graduate apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: graduate v non-graduate apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	T-test	P-value	X2	P-Value
All Candidates	945	316.5	68.3	305	313.7	62.3	109	331.7	83.5	0.84	0.403	3.43	0.064
FLK1_Nov2021	8	-	-	1	-	-	19	348.8	89.5	-	-	-	-
FLK1_Jul2022	73	331.0	79.5	2	-	-	14	368.2	92.9	2.75	0.159	0.02	0.898
FLK1_Jan2023	39	313.5	69.2	40	277.3	27.5	42	331.2	88.1	3.56	<0.001	12.15	<0.001
FLK1_Jul2023	185	320.7	70.8	22	316.8	54.5	13	360.8	100	0.34	0.740	1.73	0.188
FLK1_Jan2024	134	316.0	64.9	84	309.3	63.1	10	263.5	40	0.97	0.332	0.02	0.897
FLK1_Jul2024	269	310.2	63.2	22	282.8	36.4	2	-	-	2.37	0.026	5.09	0.024
FLK1_Jan2025	237	316.6	69.6	134	331.9	77.6	9	-	-	-2.90	<0.001	2.36	0.125

FLK2: The boxplots below show the score distributions for apprentice candidates separated by recorded apprenticeship type for candidates taking FLK2 a first attempt in the reporting period.



Overall, there are no differences in scores or pass rate between graduate apprentices and non-graduate apprentices in FLK2 assessments. Graduate apprentices performed better than non-graduate apprentices in the July 2022, January 2023 and January 2024 cohorts.

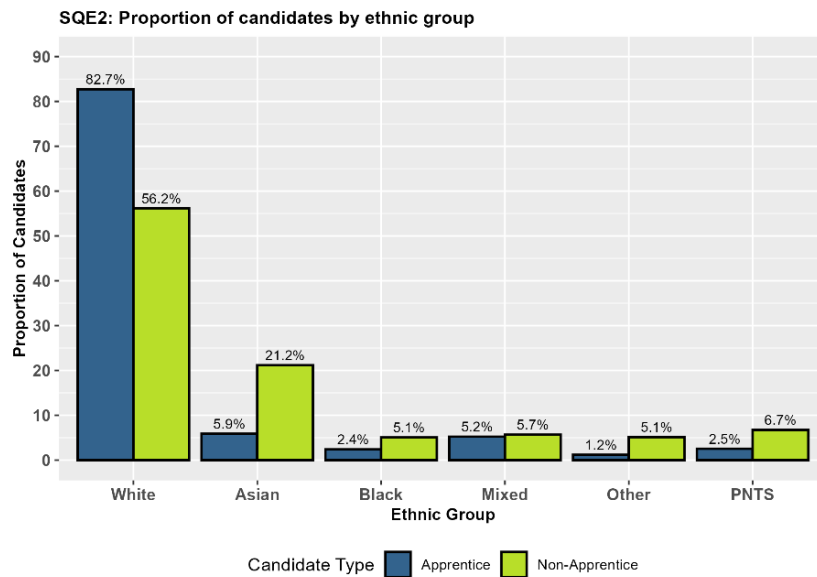
FLK2 Assessment	Graduate Apprentices			Non-Graduate Apprentices			Unknown Apprentice Type			T-tests for differences in mean scores: graduate v non-graduate apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: graduate v non-graduate apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	T-test	P-value	X2	P-Value
All Candidates	945	316.7	68.4	302	312.9	63.2	108	331.6	77.8	1.03	0.302	2.49	0.115
FLK2_Nov2021	8	-	-	1	-	-	19	345.6	78.9	-	-	-	-
FLK2_Jul2022	73	326.1	72.6	2	-	-	14	360.1	85.7	2.86	0.007	0.00	0.957
FLK2_Jan2023	40	313.0	62.5	40	286.1	32.5	42	336.1	88.1	2.50	0.015	6.07	<0.001
FLK2_Jul2023	186	315.2	72.6	23	315.6	65.2	13	352.8	92.3	-0.03	0.973	0.25	0.621
FLK2_Jan2024	132	322.4	72.7	83	305.7	59	9	-	-	2.26	0.025	3.75	0.053
FLK2_Jul2024	270	311.4	63	21	280.8	47.6	2	-	-	1.77	0.090	1.35	0.246
FLK2_Jan2025	236	318.4	67.8	132	329.9	76.5	9	-	-	-1.89	0.059	2.71	0.100

SQE2 - Apprentices vs Non-Apprentices - Candidate Characteristics

Overall, 6.3% of candidates attempting SQE2 assessments as a first attempt were apprentices in the reporting period. The proportion of apprentices ranged from 0% in Oct-22 to 14.4% in Jan-25. This section compares the characteristics of apprentices with non-apprentice candidates in the aggregated SQE2 cohorts.

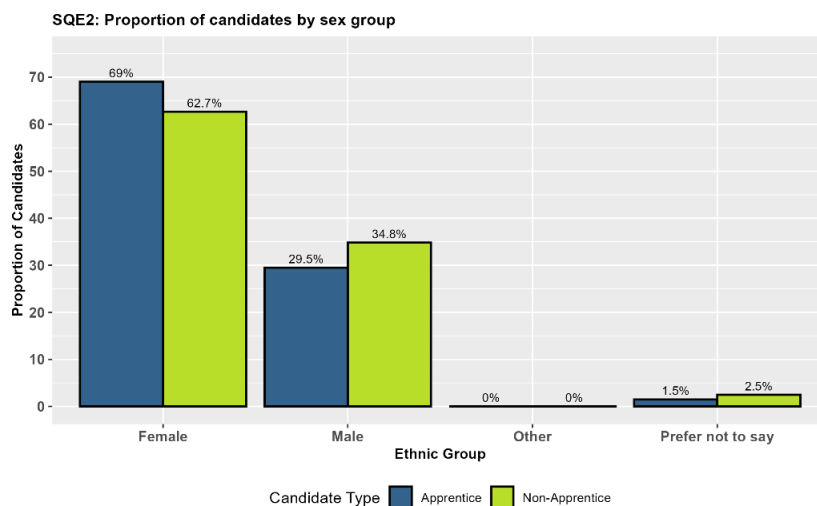
Ethnicity

Apprentice candidates are more likely to be of white ethnicity compared to non-apprentice candidates in the overall SQE2 cohort (82.7% vs 56.2%).



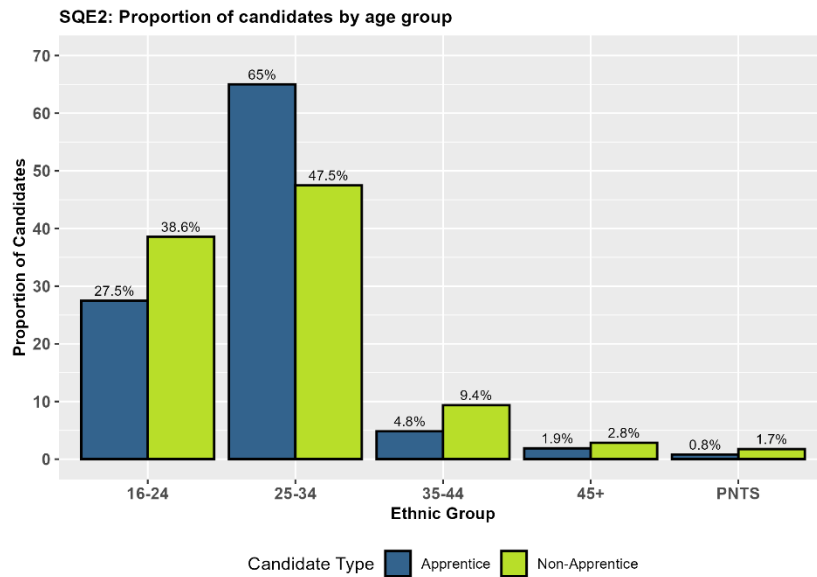
Sex

Apprentice candidates are more likely to be female compared to non-apprentice candidates in the overall SQE2 cohort (69% vs 62.7%).



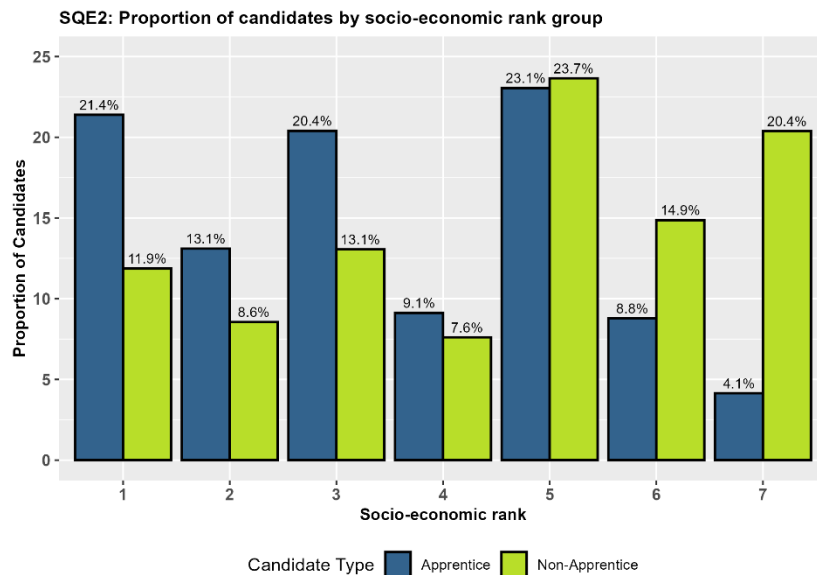
Age

The age profile of apprentice candidates is slightly younger than non-apprentice candidates in the overall SQE2 cohort.



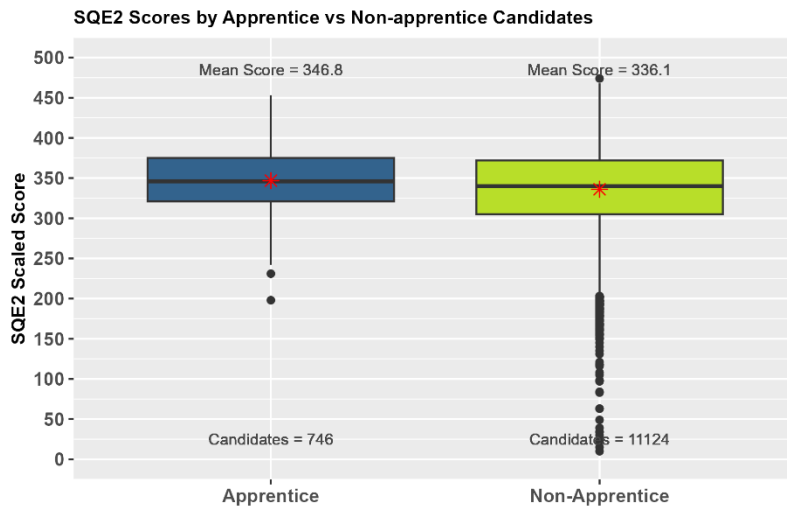
Socio-economic rank

Apprentice candidates are more likely to come from lower socio-economic rank groups compared to non-apprentice candidates in the overall SQE2 cohort: 55% of apprentice candidates are in the lowest three SE rank groups (groups 1, 2 and 3) compared with 34% of non-apprentice candidates.



SQE2 - Apprentices vs Non-Apprentices - Performance

The boxplots below show the score distributions of apprentice and non-apprentice candidates who took SQE2 assessments as a first attempt in the reporting period.

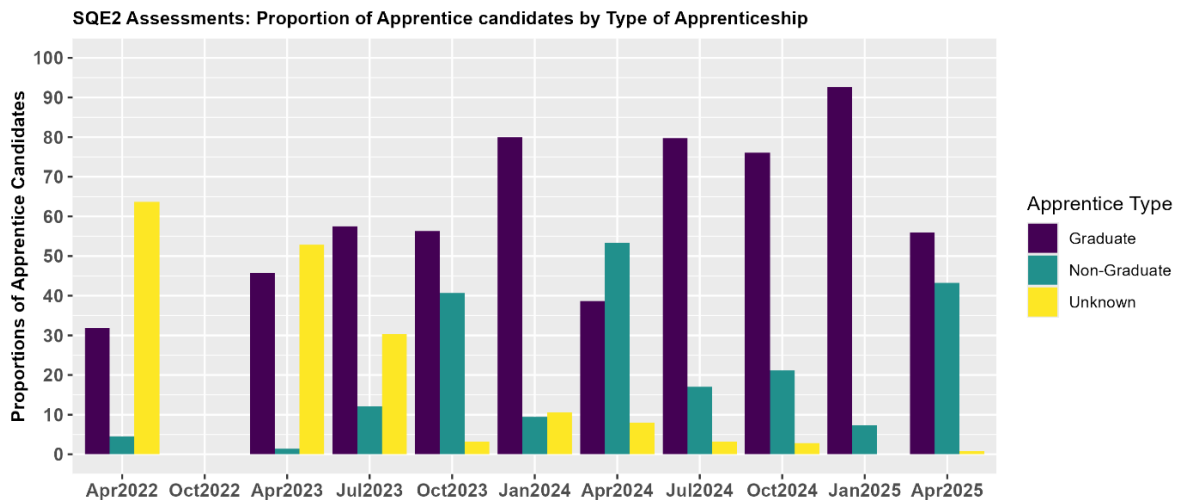


Overall, apprentice candidates to date have scored significantly higher and achieved significantly higher pass rates in SQE2 than non-apprentice candidates. Apprentices achieved higher scores than non-apprentices in all but the April 2025 SQE2 assessments.

SQE2 Assessment	Full Cohort			Apprentices			Non-Apprentices			T-tests for differences in mean scores: apprentices v non-apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: apprentices v non-apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	T-test	P-value	X2	P-Value
All Candidates	11870	336.7	79.7	746	346.8	87.8	11124	336.1	79.1	6.76	<0.001	31.90	<0.001
SQE2_Apr2022	726	338.4	77.3	22	388.3	100	704	336.9	76.6	5.35	<0.001	5.41	0.020
SQE2_Oct2022	599	328.8	72.1	0	-	-	599	328.8	72.1	-	-	-	-
SQE2_Apr2023	922	342.8	80.4	70	382.3	97.1	852	339.6	79	8.91	<0.001	12.38	<0.001
SQE2_Jul2023	942	344.9	82.4	33	349.9	97	909	344.7	81.8	0.82	0.417	4.03	0.045
SQE2_Oct2023	542	322.3	69	32	350.5	100	510	320.5	67.1	4.73	<0.001	13.78	<0.001
SQE2_Jan2024	828	330.9	76.4	95	339.8	85.3	733	329.7	75.3	2.10	0.038	4.09	0.043
SQE2_Apr2024	2094	334.9	80.9	75	336.7	84	2019	334.8	80.8	0.42	0.674	0.29	0.592
SQE2_Jul2024	858	335.8	77.6	94	339.6	87.2	764	335.4	76.4	0.93	0.354	5.01	0.025
SQE2_Oct2024	840	334.5	82.7	71	345.3	90.1	769	333.5	82.1	2.67	0.009	2.44	0.119
SQE2_Jan2025	942	333.6	77.3	136	343.5	84.6	806	331.9	76.1	2.99	0.003	4.32	0.038
SQE2_Apr2025	2577	341.5	83.7	118	338.8	81.4	2459	341.6	83.8	-0.75	0.456	0.34	0.563

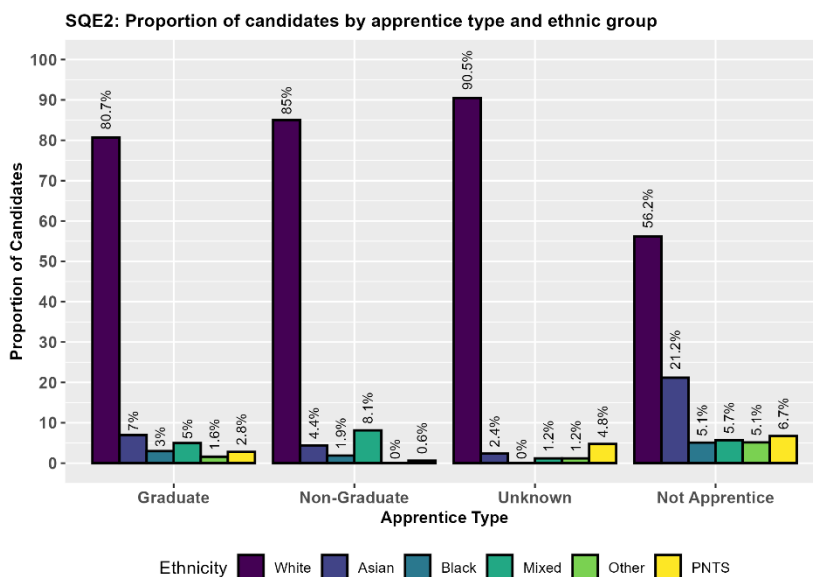
SQE2 – Graduate Apprentices vs Non-Graduate Apprentices – Candidate Characteristics

Data on the type of apprenticeships (graduate or non-graduate) show that the majority of apprentices in the SQE2 cohorts to date have been graduate apprentices (noting the varying degrees of missing data on this metric especially in the early SQE2 cohorts). A similar trend to that observed in SQE1 appears to be emerging in SQE2 cohorts, with higher proportions of non-graduate apprentices sitting the April SQE2 assessments. It is expected that these proportions will continue to change as more non-graduate apprentices come through the system.



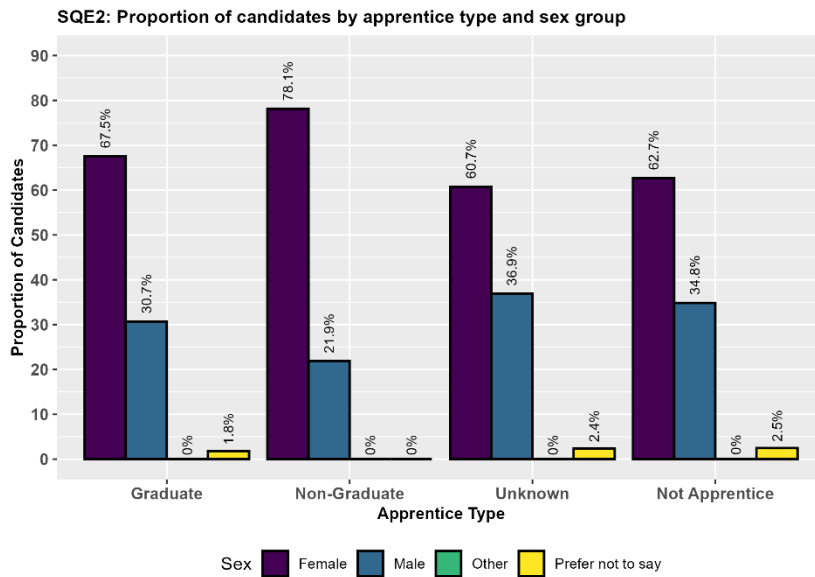
Ethnicity

Non-graduate apprentice candidates are slightly more likely to be of white ethnicity compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE2 cohorts overall (85.0% vs 80.7%) - though this difference is not significant.



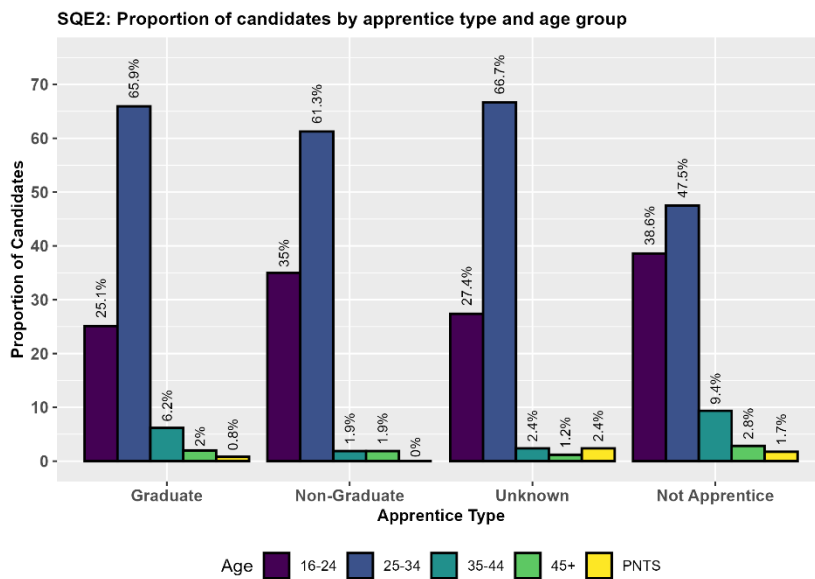
Sex

Non-graduate apprentice candidates are more likely to be female compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE2 cohorts overall (78.1% vs 67.5%).



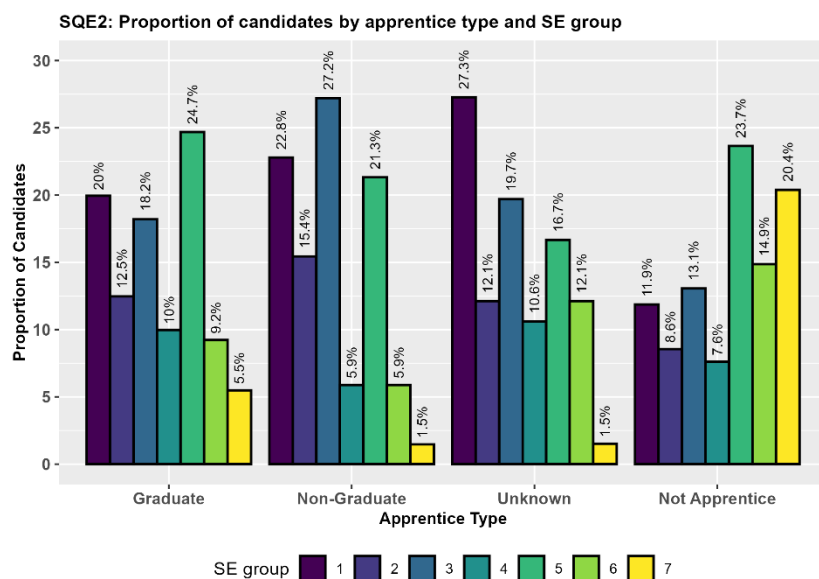
Age

The age profile of apprentice non-graduate apprentice candidates is slightly younger than that of graduate apprentice candidates in SQE2 cohorts overall, as would be expected.



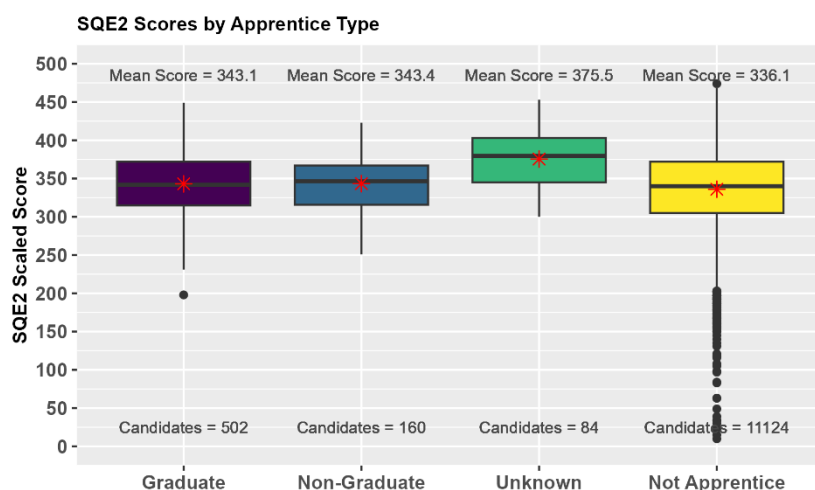
Socio-economic rank

Non-graduate apprentices are more likely to come from lower socio-economic rank groups compared to graduate apprentice candidates in SQE2 cohorts overall. 50.7% of graduate apprentice candidates are in the lowest three SE rank groups compared with 65.4% of non-graduate apprentice candidates.



SQE2 – Graduate Apprentices vs Non-Graduate Apprentices - Performance

The boxplots below show the score distributions for apprentice candidates separated by recorded apprenticeship type (including where the apprenticeship type is unknown) and for all non-apprentice candidates taking SQE2 as a first attempt in the reporting period.



Overall, there was no difference between graduate apprentices and non-graduate apprentices in terms of scores or pass rates achieved in SQE2 assessments. Non-graduate apprentices performed better than graduate apprentices in the April 2024 and April 2025 cohorts, but the opposite effect was observed in the January 2025 cohort.

SQE2 Assessment	Graduate Apprentices			Non-Graduate Apprentices			Non-Graduate Apprentices			T-tests for differences in mean scores: graduate v non-graduate apprentices		Chi-sq tests for differences in pass rates: graduate v non-graduate apprentices	
	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	n	Mean Score	Pass Rate (%)	T-test	P-value	X2	P-Value
All Candidates	502	343.1	85.9	160	343.4	87.5	84	375.5	100	-0.08	0.938	0.16	0.694
SQE2_Apr2022	7	-	-	1	-	-	14	395.0	100	-	-	-	-
SQE2_Oct2022	0	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
SQE2_Apr2023	32	369.6	93.8	1	-	-	37	392.5	100	-	-	-	-
SQE2_Jul2023	19	357.4	94.7	4	-	-	10	337.2	100	0.48	0.655	0.00	1
SQE2_Oct2023	18	351.4	100	13	348.0	100	1	-	-	0.30	0.765	0.81	0.369
SQE2_Jan2024	76	336.6	81.6	9	-	-	10	359.1	100	-0.60	0.563	0.87	0.35
SQE2_Apr2024	29	319.6	75.9	40	346.2	87.5	6	-	-	-3.04	0.003	0.88	0.349
SQE2_Jul2024	75	340.4	86.7	16	338.1	87.5	3	-	-	0.22	0.830	0.00	1
SQE2_Oct2024	54	349.8	94.4	15	329.9	73.3	2	-	-	1.99	0.060	3.66	0.056
SQE2_Jan2025	126	345.5	86.5	10	318.6	60	0	-	-	2.65	0.022	3.16	0.075
SQE2_Apr2025	66	331.9	74.2	51	347.3	90.2	1	-	-	-2.15	0.034	3.81	0.051

Appendix - Method for calculating the socio-economic rank

1. Data using the responses to the following three questions in the monitoring and maximising diversity survey was used:
 - i) What type of school did you attend for the most time between the ages of 11 and 16?
 - ii) What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were aged about 14?
 - iii) Did either of your parents attend university by the time you were 18?
2. The responses were re-coded to reduce the number of unique responses and simplify the analyses. These were coded as follows:

Characteristic	1	2	3
School type	Non-selective state school	Independent or fee-paying (bursary) / Selective state school	Independent or fee-paying (no bursary)
Occupation of household earner	Working class	Intermediate	Professional
Parent/s attended university	No, neither attended university	-	Yes, one or both attended university

3. To ensure robustness of the analyses, candidates who responded 'Prefer not to say' or where the response did not provide meaningful data relating specifically to socio-economic status (e.g. 'Other' or 'I don't know') were excluded from the analyses. Candidates who attended school outside of the UK were also excluded as this response cannot be ranked when considering school type in the context of a socio-economic scale.
4. To provide a more holistic analysis of the candidate socio-economic characteristics the coded values of the three characteristics were added together for each candidate (values of between 3 and 9), with this total sum then ranked from 1 to 7, with 1 being the lowest socio-economic rank value (equating to total sum=3; potentially the least advantaged candidates) and 7 being the highest socio-economic rank value (equating to total sum=9; potentially the most advantaged candidates).