

SQE1 Assessment Specification

Applicable for assessments from 1 September 2026

Updated: April 2026

This page is also available in Welsh. [Mae'r dudalen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.](#)

NOTE: this version shows the changes made following the 2026 annual review process.

Guidance on the SQE1 Assessment Specification

This guidance is designed to assist with the interpretation of the SQE1 Assessment Specification.

Candidates should read each SQE Assessment Specification by considering all parts together. The Assessment Specification for SQE1 contains a number of sections setting out guidance on various topics relating to the SQE1 assessments, including an overview of the SQE1 assessments (FLK1 and FLK2), how the assessments test the application of legal rules and principles, the use of legal authorities and how Ethics and Professional Conduct is tested. There is also a section explaining Functional Legal Knowledge (FLK) with links to both FLK1 and FLK2 at the bottom of the page.

Candidates may find it helpful to note:

- The questions in SQE1 are designed to test the application of fundamental legal rules and principles at the level required of a competent newly qualified solicitor. They are not designed to test specialist practice which is unlikely to be encountered at this level.

- Questions assess fundamental legal principles and rules that are covered in the FLK.

To ensure the fairness and integrity of the SQE, information about the SQE Assessment Specifications will be released to all stakeholders at the same time. There will be an annual review of the FLK to:

- Update to reflect changes in the law and practice
- Offer clarification in the light of feedback from stakeholders where necessary in the light of the information above
- Make any other essential changes.

Overview of SQE1 assessments

The two SQE1 Functioning Legal Knowledge (FLK) assessments comprise the following subject areas:

- FLK1: (1) Business Law and Practice; (2) Dispute Resolution; (3) Contract Law; (4) Tort; (5) Legal System of England and Wales; Constitutional and Administrative Law and EU Law (collectively referred to as 'Legal System') and (6) Legal Services.
- FLK2: (1) Property Law and Practice; (2) Wills and the Administration of Estates; (3) Solicitors Accounts (examined in the context of Property Law and Practice and Wills and the Administration of Estates); (4) Land Law; (5) Trusts Law; (6) Criminal Liability and (7) Criminal Law and Practice.

Within each of the above FLK assessments, questions may draw on any combination of the subject areas which might be encountered in practice.

Ethics and Professional Conduct will be examined pervasively across the two assessments above.

Principles of taxation will be examined only in the context of:

- Business Law and Practice
- Property Law and Practice
- Wills and the Administration of Estates

Subject areas are grouped within two sections giving details of each of the two FLK assessments (FLK1 and FLK2). For each subject area, Assessment Objectives are set out, followed by the knowledge of law and practice which candidates are expected to apply in order to answer the questions.

Functioning Legal Knowledge

Scope of knowledge required

The depth and breadth of knowledge of English and Welsh law required of candidates is that of functioning legal knowledge. This means that candidates must apply their knowledge of the law to demonstrate the competences required to the level of a newly qualified solicitor of England and Wales.

The FLK assessments for SQE1 will sample from the content indicated in this assessment specification. A blueprint is provided at [Annex 4](#).

Core legal principles and rules

The core legal principles and rules a candidate will be asked to apply are identified by subject area below. A candidate should be able to apply these fundamental legal principles and rules appropriately and effectively at the level required of a competent newly qualified solicitor in practice, to realistic client-based and ethical problems and situations. Each single best answer question is followed by five possible answers. There is only one correct answer to each question. Candidates should select only one answer for each question. Please see [SQE1 sample questions](#) for more information on single best answer questions.

The relationship between the [Statement of Solicitor Competence](#) (SoSC) and the legal principles and rules which candidates must know and apply is indicated at [Annex 3](#). In the SQE1 assessments, candidates will be tested at Level 3 of the Threshold Standard - i.e. that of the newly qualified solicitor – as set out in [Annex 6](#).

Closed book assessment

The SQE1 FLK assessments are closed book. The questions in the assessments are designed to test the application of fundamental legal principles which can be expected of a newly qualified solicitor of England and Wales without reference to books and notes. They are not designed to test matters of detail which a newly qualified solicitor would be expected to look up.

Law cut off date

The cut off date for the law upon which candidates are examined in the SQE will be four calendar months prior to the date of the first assessment in an assessment window. Candidates will be tested on the law as it stands at that date. They will not be tested on the development of the law. For the avoidance of doubt, changes in the law which are implemented on the calendar date four calendar months prior to the first SQE assessment in an assessment window may be examined.

Taxation

A question may require a candidate to perform a calculation by applying rules, rates, percentages and thresholds to identify a correct figure. For questions on taxation, candidates will be expected to be aware of the availability of certain reliefs and exemptions and of any conditions relevant to their application. However, where candidates are required to apply the monetary value of any exemptions and reliefs, particular rates or thresholds, these will be provided.

Application of Legal Principles and Rules

The following illustrations of the range of question style used to test the FLK are not intended to be exhaustive:

- A question may require the candidate to both identify and apply a fundamental legal principle or rule.
- A question may identify the relevant legal principle or rule and require the candidate to identify how it should be properly applied, and/or the outcome of that proper application.
- A candidate may be required to demonstrate that they understand whether a client can legally achieve a desired outcome and offer appropriate explanatory advice.
- Where the legal result of a client's action is already established by the question, the candidate may be required to identify why the application of a legal principle or rule produces that result in law and/or what the relevant legal principle or rule is.

~~A question may require a candidate to perform a calculation by applying rules, rates, percentages and thresholds to identify a correct figure. For questions on taxation, candidates will be expected to remember certain thresholds and rates of tax and to be aware of the availability of certain reliefs and exemptions where these have been part of the UK tax system for a considerable period. However, within the UK tax system, many rates and thresholds and some exemptions and reliefs are subject to adjustment, introduction or removal by successive Budgets, and for those, the figures required to work out an answer to any tax calculation would normally be provided.~~

Sample questions

The published [sample questions](#) provide examples of the style of questions which may be used to test the candidate's ability to apply the fundamental legal principles and rules that are set out in this assessment specification.

The sources and application of law in the single legal jurisdiction of England and Wales

Whilst Wales does not form a separate legal jurisdiction (it is part of the legal jurisdiction of England and Wales), the laws that apply in England may be different from the laws that apply in Wales. In Wales, the Welsh language has official status and can be used in proceedings in Wales. These factors have consequences for how the law operates in Wales.

Candidates will be required to show that they can apply their knowledge of the sources of primary and secondary legislation in England and Wales and how that law is applied.

Solicitors of England and Wales are entitled to practise both in England and in Wales. Candidates will be required to apply, at the level of the newly qualified solicitor, their knowledge that, in relation to certain topics, the law is different in the two territories.

Legal Authorities

On occasion in legal practice a case name or statutory provision is, for example, the term normally used to describe a legal principle or an area of law, or a rule or procedural step (e.g. *Rylands v Fletcher*, CPR Part 36, Section 25 notice). In such circumstances, candidates are required to know and be able to use such case names, statutory provisions etc. In all other circumstances candidates are not required to recall specific case names, or cite statutory or regulatory authorities.

Ethics and professional conduct

Candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to act honestly and with integrity, and in accordance with the SRA Standards and Regulations as follows:

- The purpose, scope and content of the [SRA Principles](#)
- The purpose, scope and content of the Code of Conduct, which consists of:
 - SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, ~~and~~ RFLs and RSLs (in assessments, this will be referred to as the “SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors”)
 - SRA Code of Conduct for Firms in relation to:
 - Managers in authorised firms
 - Compliance Officers.

Together referred to as the Code of Conduct.

See SoSC (A1) at [Annex 1.](#)

Ethics and Professional Conduct will be examined pervasively across the two assessments and can be examined across all subject areas. As with the other subject areas, the questions will be based on realistic client-based problems and situations which can include those set out in relevant SRA warning notices, such as those relating to Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs).

Functioning Legal Knowledge and Annexes

- [Functioning Legal Knowledge 1](#)
- [Functioning Legal Knowledge 2](#)
- [Annex 1 - Statement of Solicitor Competence](#)
- [Annex 2 - SQE Assessment Approach](#)
- [Annex 3 - Assessment Objectives and Statement of Solicitor Competence](#)
- [Annex 4 - Functioning Legal Knowledge blueprint](#)

- [Annex 5 - Overview: Statement of Solicitor Competence mapped against SQE1 Functioning Legal Knowledge](#)
 - [Annex 6 - Threshold Standard](#)
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