

# SQE2 assessment specification

**Only 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 SQE2 Assessment Specification

This guidance is designed to assist with the interpretation of the SQE2 Assessment Specification.

Candidates should read each SQE Assessment Specification considering all parts together. The Assessment Specification for SQE2 contains a number of sections setting out guidance on various topics relating to the SQE2 assessment, including:

1. An overview the SQE2 assessment which sets out the individual legal skills assessments and practice areas
2. Organisation and delivery which covers the SQE2 oral and SQE2 written assessments, and
3. Marking SQE2 which provides an overview and information in relation to the level of legal detail required, legal authorities, application of law, correct and comprehensive application of law, **ethics and professional conduct**, application of law in the single jurisdiction of England and Wales, clear, precise, concise, and acceptable language and passing SQE2.

There is also information on legal materials and information (Overview, Assessment Objectives and Assessment Criteria) about each of the assessments in the [Assessments in SQE2](#) section.

Candidates may find it helpful to note that:

- The questions in SQE2 are designed to test legal skills within the context of 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 test fundamental legal principles and rules that are clearly covered by the Functioning Legal Knowledge (FLK).

To ensure the fairness and integrity of the SQE, information about the 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
- Make any other essential changes.

## **Overview of the SQE2 assessment**

### **Legal skills assessments**

The legal skills assessments in SQE2 are:

- client interview and attendance note/legal analysis
- advocacy
- case and matter analysis
- legal research
- legal writing
- legal drafting.

Further detail about each of these assessments is given in Assessments in SQE2.

Although there is no separate assessment called negotiation, all deliveries of SQE2 will contain at least one assessment involving negotiation. Negotiation may be assessed in either interview and attendance note/legal analysis and/or case and matter analysis and/or legal writing.

## Practice areas

The practice areas in which these legal skills are assessed are:

- Criminal **Law and Practice (Criminal Litigation)**, including advising clients at the police station
- Dispute Resolution
- Property Practice (**including money laundering**)
- Wills **and the Administration of Estates (Wills and Intestacy, Probate Administration and Practice)**
- Business **Law and Practice, including** organisations, rules and procedures (including money laundering and financial services).

Questions in these practice areas may draw on underlying black letter law in the Functioning Legal Knowledge (FLK) as follows:

- Criminal **Law and Practice (Criminal Litigation)**: Criminal Liability
- Dispute Resolution: Contract Law and Tort
- Property Practice: Land Law
- Wills **and the Administration of Estates (Wills and Intestacy, Probate Administration and Practice)**: Trusts Law
- Business **Law and Practice, including** organisations, rules and procedures: Contract Law.

# Ethics and Professional Conduct

Ethics and Professional conduct will be core parts of SQE2.

Ethics and professional conduct will be pervasive throughout SQE2. Ethics and professional conduct issues will not be flagged and candidates will need to identify any ethical and professional conduct issues and exercise judgment to resolve them honestly and with integrity.

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).

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:
  - SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, 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.

# Taxation

Questions involving taxation may arise in Property Practice; Wills and the Administration of Estates (Wills and Intestacy, Probate Administration and Practice); and Business Law and Practice (organisations, rules and procedures).

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.

## Examinable content

Detail of the examinable content covered is given in Annex 1. Annex 1 is a sub-set of the FLK in SQE1.

For the avoidance of doubt the Legal System of England and Wales (including constitutional and administrative law and EU law), Legal Services (apart from money laundering and financial services) and Solicitors' Accounts are not examined in SQE2. Money laundering and financial services are examinable in the context of Business Law and Practice (including organisations, rules and procedures) and Property Practice (money laundering only).

## 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.

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## SQE2 organisation and delivery

For practical purposes SQE2 is divided into two parts as follows:

### SQE2 oral

The assessments in SQE2 oral are:

- Interview and attendance note/legal analysis
- Advocacy.

SQE2 oral will take place over two half days. The following table shows the assessments candidates will undertake on each of the days. Candidates will take a total of four oral legal skills assessments.

Day 1	Day 2
Advocacy (Dispute Resolution)	Advocacy (Criminal Law and Practice (Criminal Litigation))

Interview and attendance note/legal analysis (Property Practice)

Interview and attendance note/legal analysis (Wills and the Administration of Estates (Wills and Intestacy, Probate Administration and Practice)

Please note that different candidates may complete the assessments in different orders. Candidates may therefore start with either the interview and attendance note/legal analysis or the advocacy.

Further details of the assessments are available in [Assessments in SQE2](#) as follows: Client interviewing and completion of attendance note/legal analysis and Advocacy.

## SQE2 written

The assessments in SQE2 written are:

- Case and matter analysis
- Legal research
- Legal writing
- Legal drafting

SQE2 written takes place over three half-days. You will take a total of 12 written legal skills assessments.

**Day 1**

**Day 2**

**Day 3**

Case and matter analysis	Case and matter analysis	Case and matter analysis
Legal drafting	Legal drafting	Legal drafting
Legal research	Legal research	Legal research
Legal writing	Legal writing	Legal writing
Two of these exercises will be in the context of Dispute Resolution and two will be in the context of Criminal Litigation.	Two of these exercises will be in the context of Property Practice and two will be in the context of Wills and the Administration of Estates (Wills and Intestacy, Probate Administration and Practice).	You will sit all assessments in the context of Business Law and Practice, including organisations, rules and procedures.

You may complete the assessments in a different order to that listed.

Further details of the assessments are available in [Assessments in SQE2](#) as follows:  
Case and matter analysis, Legal research, Legal writing and Legal drafting

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# Marking SQE2

## Overview

The interviewing station will be marked by the assessor playing the role of the client and will be marked on skills only. The attendance note and all other stations will be marked by a solicitor who will assess candidates on both skills and application of law.

The assessment criteria against which candidates will be judged in each of the six types of legal skills stations are provided at Assessments in SQE2 below. Performance in each of these criteria will be assessed on a scale from A – F by trained assessors making global professional judgments related to the standard of competency of the assessment as follows:

- A. Superior performance: well above the competency requirements of the assessment
- B. Clearly satisfactory: clearly meets the competency requirements of the assessment
- C. Marginal pass: on balance, just meets the competency requirements of the assessment
- D. Marginal fail: on balance, just fails to meet the competency requirements of the assessment
- E. Clearly unsatisfactory: clearly does not meet the competency requirements of the assessment
- F. Poor performance: well below the competency requirements of the assessment.

This grading will then be converted into numerical marks such that A = 5 marks and F = 0 marks.

The marking criteria for each of the stations has been divided into marks for skills and marks for application of law (including Ethics and professional conduct). In arriving at a final mark for the candidate across all assessments, skills and application of law are weighted equally. This is to make sure that adequate weighting is given to the quality of the advice provided.

## **Level of legal detail required**

In demonstrating that they have reached the standard of competency of a newly qualified (Day One) solicitor, candidates will need to demonstrate that they can apply fundamental legal principles in the skills based situations covered by SQE2 in a way that addresses the client's needs and concerns. They will need sufficient knowledge to make them competent to practise on the basis that they can look up detail later. Candidates will not be expected to know or address detail that a newly qualified solicitor would look up, unless they have been provided with that detail as part of the assessment materials. See also the legal materials section below. Sample questions and indicative answers are published on the SQE website.

## **Legal Authorities**

On occasion in legal practice a case name or statutory provision, for example, is the term normally used to describe a legal principle or an area of law, or a rule or procedural step (eg *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.

The above guidance does not apply to the SQE2 Legal Research assessment (see Assessments in SQE2 below) in which candidates can be expected to cite specific case names, or cite statutory or regulatory authorities.

In all other circumstances candidates are not required to recall specific case names, or cite statutory or regulatory authorities.

## Application of law

The assessment criteria for SQE2 refer to correct and comprehensive application of law. The following is a non-exhaustive list of what this may include:

- Identifying relevant legal principles
- Applying legal principles to factual issues, so as to produce a solution which best addresses a client's needs and reflects the client's commercial or personal circumstances, including as part of a negotiation
- Interpreting, evaluating and applying the results of research
- Ensuring that advice is informed by appropriate legal analysis and identifies the consequences of different options
- Drafting documents which are legally effective
- Applying understanding, critical thinking and analysis to solve problems
- Assessing information to identify key issues and risks
- Recognising inconsistencies and gaps in information
- Evaluating the quality and reliability of information
- Using multiple sources of information to make effective judgments
- Reaching reasoned decisions supported by relevant evidence.

## Correct and comprehensive application of law

The assessment criteria for application of law refer to:

- legally correct
- ~~and~~ legally comprehensive; and
- ethics and professional conduct.

How each of these is interpreted will depend on an academic judgment about each assessment informed by the Statement of Solicitor Competence (Annex 3) and the Functioning Legal Knowledge for SQE2 (Annex 1).

For instance, in an assessment where the candidate has to identify and apply legal principles, credit might be awarded under Legally Correct for identifying the

correct legal principles and applying these to the specific facts. Credit might then be awarded under Legally Comprehensive for the extent to which candidates have identified and applied the correct legal principles, as well as for providing a comprehensive analysis of the legal issues.

Where the legal principles are made explicit in the question, credit under Legally Correct might be awarded for the correct application of the legal principles to the facts. Credit under legally comprehensive might be awarded for giving a comprehensive analysis of those principles as well as a comprehensive analysis of any other legal issues in the context of the specific facts.

Where a question involves any ethics and professional conduct issue(s), candidates will be expected to identify the ethical and professional conduct issue(s) and exercise judgment to resolve them honestly and with integrity.

~~For instance, in an assessment where the candidate has to identify the legal issues, credit for this might be given under legally comprehensive. Where the legal issues are made explicit in the question, credit under legally comprehensive might be awarded for giving a comprehensive analysis of those issues, not just for identifying them.~~

## **Application of law in the single 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.

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.

## Clear, precise, concise and acceptable language

The assessment criteria for the written skills refer to clear, precise, concise and acceptable language. This may include:

- Using clear, succinct and accurate language and avoiding unnecessary technical terms where they are not appropriate to the recipient
- Using an acceptable style of communication for the situation and recipient.

There is no spell check function for the SQE2 written assessments.

The highlighter function will be available for candidates to use but only on the Pearson Vue assessment platform.

Further guidance provided to markers for SQE2 written assessments on spelling and grammar is set out below.

- Candidates should not lose marks for spelling mistakes that:
  - do not impact on the legal accuracy, clarity and/or certainty of the written text; and
  - would normally be flagged by spell check functionality, noting that spell check would not, for example, necessarily flag errors in names, addresses, dates or values.
- Candidates should not lose marks for grammatical errors that:
  - do not impact on the legal accuracy, clarity and/or certainty of the written text, noting that, for example, grammatical errors in the use of tense could have such an impact; and
  - do not make the written text inaccessible to the intended reader.
- Candidates should not lose marks for poor formatting, given the lack of formatting support on the test platform and the time restraints under which candidates are working.

## Passing SQE2

In order to pass SQE2 candidates must obtain the overall pass mark for SQE2. For the avoidance of doubt please note that there is not a separate pass mark for SQE2 oral and SQE2 written. There is one pass mark for SQE2 as a whole. For details of how the pass mark is set see the [Marking and Standard Setting Policy](#).

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## Legal materials

For all stations except legal research, candidates will be provided, as part of their assessment materials, with materials that a newly qualified solicitor would look up. **For example, in Property Practice this includes a copy of the relevant Standard Conditions of Sale or Standard Commercial Property Conditions.**

Candidates will need sufficient knowledge to make them competent to practise on the basis that they can look up detail later. Candidates will not be expected to know or address detail that a newly qualified solicitor would look up, unless they have been provided with that detail as part of their assessment materials. However, legal materials will only be provided where it is considered that a newly qualified solicitor would need to refer to those materials. Sample questions and discussion of answers are published on the SQE website. For detail on the legal research assessment see the Legal research section in Assessments in SQE2.

Any other materials, such as books and notes, cannot be brought into or used during the assessments.

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# Assessments in SQE2 and Annexes

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**Assessments in SQE2**

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**Annex 1 - Functioning Legal Knowledge for SQE2**

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**Annex 2 - Threshold Standard**

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**Annex 3 - Statement of Solicitor Competence**

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**Annex 4 - SQE2 skills mapping against the SoSC**

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## **SQE2 sample questions**

Sample questions give you an idea of the style of questions which may be used to test your ability to apply fundamental legal principles and rules.

**Try the SQE2 sample questions**