



*qLegal is an innovative legal services provider that works with LLM students at the Centre for Commercial Law Studies, Queen Mary University of London.*

## **qLegal’s Qualifying Work Experience (“QWE”) Policy**

This Policy is intended as a guide to help law students participating in qLegal understand and abide by qLegal’s policy and procedures regarding QWE. (Last Updated: October 2024)

### **What is Qualifying Work Experience?**

1. From 2021, there has been a phased change in the way individuals can qualify to become a solicitor in England and Wales. This new route is commonly known as the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (“**SQE**”). The Solicitors Regulation Authority (“**SRA**”) is the body which sets the rules to qualify and practise as a solicitor in England and Wales, and the SRA is the body that is ultimately in charge of the SQE. In short, there are now four requirements for qualifying as a solicitor in England and Wales:
  - (i) Completion of a degree (whether in law or another subject);
  - (ii) Passing the SQE 1 (a knowledge-based assessment) and the SQE 2 (a skills-based assessment);
  - (iii) A minimum of two years Qualifying Work Experience (“**QWE**”); and
  - (iv) Pass the SRA’s character and suitability requirements.
2. This Policy is primarily focused on the third requirement listed above, QWE, and is further limited in scope to qLegal’s procedures regarding QWE. (Please note that due to qLegal’s model of partnering with external UK solicitors for review and supervision of your client interview, case and matter analysis, legal research and legal writing, qLegal is unlikely to be able to provide a reference in support of a qLegal student’s application for an individual SQE 2 exemption.)
3. The SRA defines QWE as *“any experience of providing legal services that offers a candidate the opportunity to develop some or all of the competencies needed to practice*

as a solicitor.”<sup>1</sup> QWE can be obtained at any point during the other stages of the SQE (so before, during or after the SQE assessments 1 and 2).

### **3 key points to remember:**

4. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain their own QWE records including details of the legal services provided and the competencies developed. In the *How to Claim QWE* section below, we include a link to a helpful SRA template for recording QWE.
5. Before deciding whether to seek QWE authorisation from qLegal, it is important to think through how you will obtain the two years’ worth of QWE required by the SRA and whether the small number of hours possible from qLegal are worth claiming as QWE.
6. The main reasons to participate in qLegal are to gain valuable skills and experience that will prepare you for future employment and that will be helpful preparation for the SQE 2 skills-based assessment should you decide to apply to become a solicitor of England and Wales. We encourage you to reflect on the wide range of personal and professional benefits you will get from participating in qLegal.

### **What “legal services” at qLegal are eligible for QWE?**

7. QWE needs to be grounded in **legal services delivered in a real-life environment** and needs to be obtained while working under the **supervision of a qualified solicitor** with direct knowledge of your legal work. To be a qualified solicitor for purposes of QWE, the solicitor needs to be a solicitor of England and Wales but does not need to hold a practising certificate.
8. The SRA points to the definition of a legal activity as defined in the Legal Services Act 2007 to determine whether work counts as “legal services” for the purpose of QWE:

“(b) any other activity which consists of one or both of the following –  
(i) the provision of legal advice or assistance in connection with the application of the law or with any form of resolution of legal disputes ...”

### **How many hours of QWE can you claim via qLegal?**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sqa.sra.org.uk/about-sqa/what-is-the-sqa/qualifying-work-experience> [accessed 10.08.2022]

9. You are allowed to claim **a maximum of 20 hours** of QWE from your qLegal experience, irrespective of your qLegal programme.
10. Please remember that to satisfy the QWE requirement of the SQE, you are required to have a full **two years'** worth of QWE. The two years' worth of QWE can be submitted from one organisation or from a maximum of four separate organisations. **Please consider that it only really makes sense to claim QWE for your time at qLegal if you anticipate being short 20 hours in your total two years' worth of QWE.** We anticipate that the vast majority of qLegal students will determine that it is not worth submitting their qLegal deemed hours as QWE because the possible number of hours are so small. Of course, you can and should describe your qLegal experience on your CV, on your LinkedIn profile and in your job interviews regardless of whether you are also seeking to submit the time as QWE.
11. qLegal operates a policy of 'deemed hours' rather than actual hours. Therefore, regardless of how many hours you spent on a legal activity with qLegal, if you have completed the activity, you will be awarded a fixed number of hours that we consider you should have spent on the activity. Also, to be clear, performing legal services always involves a fair amount of time conducting important administrative tasks (record keeping, communicating with key stakeholders, keeping your time, etc.) and repetitive, administrative tasks are not eligible for QWE, per the SRA.
12. It is your responsibility as a qLegal student to keep an accurate and detailed log of activities for which you wish to claim QWE. If the log is not sufficiently detailed, accurate and coherent, the hours will not be authorised. Equally, if you have not completed an activity to qLegal's standards, QWE hours will not be authorised. We recommend you use the SRA's template record keeping tool linked to below under the *How Do you Claim Authorisation for QWE* section.

**Which qLegal programmes are eligible for QWE and how many hours QWE will you get?**

13. There are many legal activities within qLegal which may be eligible to be counted as QWE. Based on the average number of hours that we think these legal activities should take, you will be entitled to claim **20 deemed hours QWE** upon successful completion of your qLegal activity.

14. Other QWE opportunities may arise throughout the academic year and will be considered at the discretion of the qLegal Director.
15. As previously noted, there are many other experiences within qLegal which are not eligible for QWE because they do not meet the SRA's definition of "legal activities". These experiences are excellent learning opportunities and are still directly applicable to helping you qualify as a solicitor as they will help you prepare for the SQE 2 skills-based assessment and will be important experiences to describe on your CV, on your LinkedIn profile and in your job interviews.

### **What are the required competencies related to QWE?**

16. To be eligible for QWE, the legal services in question must provide an SQE applicant with the opportunity to develop at least two of the competencies listed in the Statement of Solicitor Competence:  
<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/>.
17. Students will need to stipulate in their own records which competencies have been developed during the legal services for which they hope to claim QWE.
18. Please note that sign-off by qLegal on your requested QWE hours is not confirmation of your mastery or proficiency of the listed competencies. Instead, the qualified solicitor is confirming:
  - The description in your records of the two or more SRA-approved competencies that you were given the opportunity to develop,
  - Your description of the length of time you spent doing the eligible legal activity and the number of QWE hours deemed to arise out of that experience, and
  - That no issues arose during the qLegal experience that raise questions related to your moral character or your suitability as a solicitor of England and Wales.

### **How does QWE relate to your moral character and suitability to become a solicitor?**

19. The SRA takes the integrity of its solicitors very seriously. Accordingly, solicitor applicants must notify the SRA of any character and suitability issues when they apply to be a solicitor. These include:
  - (i) Conviction or caution for a criminal offence;
  - (ii) Behaving in a dishonest, violent or discriminatory way;

- (iii) A finding of academic misconduct (such as plagiarism or cheating) against you;  
and
- (iv) Bankruptcy.

20. If qLegal has reason to believe that your moral character and suitability to be a solicitor of England and Wales is in question (for example, though the student disciplinary procedure, academic misconduct such as plagiarism or any other relevant issue which has arisen during or after your period of education) and you submit a request to qLegal for QWE authorisation, we will be under a professional obligation to disclose the relevant details regarding your character and suitability to the SRA. This obligation means that if you have a finding of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, or some other misconduct on your record, the solicitor confirming QWE for qLegal will have to disclose this misconduct to the SRA before providing QWE confirmation. Please consider this requirement carefully before submitting a request to qLegal for QWE.

### **How do you claim authorisation for QWE?**

21. Individual students are responsible for registering QWE with the SRA. Details of the information you will need to provide is available here: <https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/registering-qualifying-work-experience/>. On the form, you are required to complete the name and SRA number of the solicitor who will be confirming your QWE. qLegal will provide you with this information when we verify your QWE.

22. Prior to submission to the SRA, please email qLegal staff at [qlegal@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:qlegal@qmul.ac.uk) with the following information:

- A completed version of the SRA's QWE Training Template (this is not the form ultimately submitted to the SRA but is a helpful record-keeping tool):

<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/>

- A copy of the information you are required to submit to the SRA.

23. For qLegal to verify QWE, we will need to consult our records of the activities which you took part in during your time at qLegal. Where the confirming solicitor cannot verify that information (regardless of reason), qLegal will not be able to confirm the QWE.

24. qLegal is permitted to keep personal records related to students for up to six years under the General Data Protection Regulation, also known as the GDPR. Accordingly, we are unable to process requests for QWE that occur over six years after the end of your participation in qLegal. We suggest that any request for QWE authorisation be made no sooner than after you have finished your participation in qLegal and no later than two years after your participation in qLegal is completed.

### **Additional Information**

25. You can read further information on QWE on the SRA Website here:

<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/>

26. If you would like to learn more about the SQE and QWE, you can listen to two episodes of a QMUL-sponsored legal education and careers podcast called ReImagine Law:

- Episode generally about the SQE qualification:  
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/2K71HQ4Z4RUZv1XcmvWf5q>
- Episode considering QWE specifically:  
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3BlDmLUk5HeWneie7eNqn0>

If you have any queries about QWE and qLegal or anything in this Policy, please contact qLegal staff via [qlegal@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:qlegal@qmul.ac.uk). Please use the subject header “QWE Query”.