

News release

SRA publishes results of first ever SQE2 assessment

25 August 2022

The results for the first SQE2 assessment - taken in April by 726 candidates in 24 countries - have been released, with 77 per cent of candidates passing.

Candidates were only allowed to take the SQE2 assessments if they had passed SQE1 or had otherwise demonstrated to us they had appropriate legal knowledge. The 53 per cent of candidates who passed the first SQE1 November 2021 were eligible to take the SQE2 assessments in April 2022.

We introduced the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) to provide assurance that all aspiring solicitors meet a consistent high standard at point of entry into the profession. The reviews and analyses of the [outcomes of the assessment](https://media.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/first-sqe-assessment-results/#tab_a0832) [https://media.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/solicitors-qualifying-examination/first-sqe-assessment-results/#tab_a0832] published today - including the report by the [independent reviewer](https://media.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/review-first-sitting-sqe2/) [https://media.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/review-first-sitting-sqe2/]- show the SQE2 was fair, reliable and valid.

Anna Bradley, Chair of the SRA Board, said 'Unlike the LPC, where exams are set and marked by multiple providers, the SQE is centrally set and marked, providing assurance that those who pass have met the same high standard. We are pleased the first SQE2 sitting went well and that analyses show the assessments were robust, fair and reliable.'

We and Kaplan, the assessment provider for the SQE, have published data on the SQE results, including information on how the assessment was administered and on the diversity of candidates. We have also published a report on the assessment by the SQE Independent Reviewer.

Geoff Coombe, the SQE's independent reviewer, said: 'Overall, I felt the SQE2 exams were appropriate for a high-stakes, competency-based exam used for professional qualification. I was reassured and satisfied that the tasks set were valid and that the pass/fail grades awarded were fitting of the standards and competency expected of a newly qualified solicitor. I observed good levels of planning and preparation and a great deal of care and attention in setting valid and reliable assessment tasks.'

Data from the assessment show that candidates with a higher degree classification achieved a higher pass rate. For instance, those who got a first-class degree had a pass rate of 92 per cent compared to 57 per cent

who got a 2:2 degree, while the pass rate among apprentices was well above the overall pass rate. Candidates who did well on SQE2 had typically done well on SQE1.

There were groups of candidates who generally performed better – for instance 92 per cent of candidates who declared a disability passed, while a higher proportion of females passed (79 per cent) compared to males (75 per cent). Those who had completed some qualifying work experience also generally did better.

As seen in SQE1, there was a difference in performance by ethnicity. Eighty-five per cent of white candidates passed compared to 72 per cent of Asian/Asian British candidates and 53 per cent of Black/Black British candidates, and 92 per cent of candidates in mixed/multi-ethnic groups passed.

Anna Bradley said: 'We have again seen the troubling and long-standing pattern of differential performance for certain groups, particularly Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates. We have commissioned the University of Exeter to undertake in-depth research into the factors driving the attainment gap for these groups in professional assessments so that we can consider next steps. The data from multiple SQE assessments will also help to provide better insight.'

Now that some candidates have completed SQE2, next month will see the first candidates qualify as a solicitor having sat both SQE assessments. In addition to passing the SQE, they need a degree or equivalent, two years' qualifying work experience and to meet our character and suitability requirements.