



# Getting the best out of your qualifying work experience

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This information can help you understand how you can get the best out of your qualifying work experience (QWE). Find out [what QWE is and what counts](https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/].

This could be helpful to aspiring solicitors who are preparing for the [Solicitors Qualifying Examination](https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/) (SQE), are currently doing their QWE or looking to start it.

It can also help with conversations before and during your placement or employment and tells you what we expect from organisations offering QWE.

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## **What we expect from organisations offering QWE?**

We have outlined what we expect from organisations we regulate and do not regulate offering QWE. This includes:

- exposing people who are doing QWE to a wide variety of tasks and legal matters which help them to develop some or all of the competences we specify in the Statement of Solicitor Competence (minimum of two)
- enabling those doing QWE to learn from experienced practitioners how to behave ethically and in accordance with the [Codes of Conduct](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/]
- providing opportunities for those doing QWE to be effectively supervised and to reflect on their work and feedback to help them identify their strengths and areas where they still need to develop
- QWE can be confirmed by a solicitor within the organisation where you work or a Compliance Officer for Legal Practice (COLP) we regulate (where the organisation offering QWE has one). Where neither of these are available, your QWE can be confirmed by another solicitor outside the organisation so long as the individual has:
  - reviewed your work during the relevant period of work experience
  - received feedback from the person or persons supervising your work.

## **Preparing for your QWE**



When deciding where to complete your QWE, you might want to think about the types of work that different organisations can offer. QWE placements are an opportunity for you to develop the competences set out in the Statement of Solicitor Competence, as well as developing ethics and professionalism. It can also help you prepare for [SQE2](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking/) [\[https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking/\]](https://sqa.sra.org.uk/registering-and-booking/) by providing an opportunity to develop and practise the legal skills assessed.

Before you start your QWE, you might find it helpful to think about the following questions and discuss them with the organisation where you might do your QWE:

- What opportunities are available for you to gain diverse and varied experience? A placement that mostly offers repetitive and limited administrative tasks and legal transactions is unlikely to help you develop the specified competences or provide you with the best chance of passing SQE2.
- What are your expectations, and what expectations does the organisation have of you? From the outset, it might be helpful to know if the placement is intended to be or can constitute QWE. It can also be helpful to discuss your career aspirations with the organisation and seek clarification on what support they can offer you if you wish to qualify as a solicitor.
- If your placement is within a regulated firm, who is the solicitor or COLP responsible for confirming your QWE? The organisation offering the placement should make this clear from the outset. If there is not a solicitor in your organisation, you will need to identify a solicitor outside the organisation who can confirm your QWE. This must be someone who has direct experience of your work. And in confirming your QWE, they will need to:
  - review your work during the relevant period of work experience
  - receive feedback from the person or people supervising your work.
- Who will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of your work? You may find it helpful to ask the supervisor:
  - how they will satisfy themselves about the quality of your work
  - how they will provide formative feedback
  - how they will check that you are getting access to a good range of tasks
  - how they will make sure you are learning how to behave ethically and in accordance with the Codes of Conduct.

## **Things to think about during your placement**

- Your placement should offer opportunities for [regular reflection](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/continuing-competence/reflect-identify/1) [\[https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/continuing-competence/reflect-identify/1\]](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/continuing-competence/reflect-identify/1) to help you identify both strengths and areas of development. This could involve your



supervisor or somebody else with knowledge of the work you have done and could include:

- appraisals or one-to-one meetings
- asking for feedback from a range of internal and external sources
- receiving feedback from a tutor, in a student law clinic setting.

Both you and your supervisor should reflect on your performance and consider what opportunities there are for further development.

- Your placement should also help you develop your professionalism. An important part of professionalism is behaving ethically. During your placement or placements, you should develop an awareness of standard procedures in relation to, for example:
  - conflicts of interest checks
  - anti-money laundering checks
  - information security.
- You should also have the opportunity to learn from experienced role models by seeing how they behave ethically and in accordance with the Codes of Conduct in difficult cases.
- If you feel that your QWE is not going well, you should discuss this with your supervisor or another colleague who is involved in your training. If the issue relates to the work you are doing, you could ask for opportunities to do different tasks or types of legal work.
- You could also think about supplementing your QWE by gaining additional experience elsewhere, for example by volunteering at a law clinic. Remember, your QWE can be gained in up to four organisations and can be paid or unpaid.

## **Recording your QWE**

Record your QWE so you can show how it's provided an opportunity for you to develop some or all of [our competences](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/1) [\[https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/1\]](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/1) (minimum of two). In doing so, you should consider:

- whether the organisation has a system or process in place to help you record your experience. If not, you can use our [training template](https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/1) [\[https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/1\]](https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/qwe-training-template/1) to help you. Your organisation should support you with collating your evidence.
- how the evidence you record demonstrates the work you have done and how the work you did provided an opportunity to develop some or all of the specified competences.

You should identify the solicitor or COLP confirming your experience and regularly talk to them so that you are both clear on how you have evidenced the competences. You could do this through your one-to ones or appraisals.



It is important that you know the name of person confirming your experience, as well as their position and SRA number.

Find out how to [record a completed period of QWE](https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/registering-qualifying-work-experience/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/sqe/qualifying-work-experience-candidates/registering-qualifying-work-experience/].

## **Getting your QWE confirmed**

The role of the solicitor or COLP is to confirm:

- details of your placement, such as where and when it took place
- whether it provided the opportunity to develop some or all of the specified competences
- that no issues arose that raise questions about character and suitability to be admitted as a solicitor, or if such confirmation cannot be given, then details of any issues that did arise.

The solicitor or COLP is not assessing your competence.

You should be clear from the outset of your placement which solicitor or COLP is responsible for confirming your QWE. If this changes, your organisation should tell you and identify another individual who is able to confirm your experience.

We expect solicitors and COLPs to comply with our [Principles](https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/principles/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/principles/] and Code of Conduct to act honestly, fairly at all times, to supervise effectively and not to abuse their position by taking unfair advantage of individuals. We also expect them to comply with Regulation 2 of our Authorisation of Individuals Regulations when confirming QWE.

We have guidance for candidates who may be experiencing difficulties getting their QWE because a solicitor or COLP is not complying with our regulations.

You can also [contact us](https://beta.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/) [https://beta.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/] if you have completed your QWE but have not been able to get sign off by your organisation due to exceptional circumstances. This might be, for example, if you have been working with a sole practitioner who is no longer a solicitor.