



**The LETR - Where are we 5 Years On?  
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# **How can we SQEeze it all in?**

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# Background & Themes

- Current approaches to legal education (focusing mainly on the law degree) in England and Wales;
- What the new qualification changes mean;
- Possible response to those changes: construction/delivery of a curriculum with something for all;
- The challenges and viability of such a progressive approach will be recognised and considered.

# Law Degree Diversity

- **Liberal education:** the traditional view of what the academy can and should promote; *“Understand[ing] the structures and values that pervade and underpin law” (Bradney, 2003)*
- **‘Black Letter’:** (traditional/elite law schools), taught doctrinally; *“The learning of what law ‘is all about’ and not just ‘what law is” (Sanders, 2015)*
- **Socio-legalism:** the study of law in society; *...“the expository orthodoxy”, “the textbook tradition” or “classical legal thought” (Twining, 1994)*
- **Practical/experiential:** (progressive law schools), learning by doing. *[Placing] the student in a position where he or she is....an active participant in the learning process (Grimes, 2018).*

# Training for Tomorrow

## (The Response to LETR)

- SRA's training goal is to ensure 'day one competence' for solicitors;
- Competence Statement (3 parts):
  - Statement of solicitor competence,
  - Threshold standard, and
  - **Statement of legal knowledge (SLK).**
- SLK mapped to the Draft Assessment Specification (June 2017).
- 'Light touch' regulation (SRA).

# The New Solicitor Qualification Changes

## The Four Elements

- **Pass SQE** - Stages 1 and 2, demonstrating knowledge and skills set out in the Competence Statement;
- **Awarded a degree/Equivalent qualification**, or have gained equivalent experience;
- **Completion of qualifying legal work experience** - Under the supervision of a solicitor/an entity under SRA regulation for at least two years;
- **Character & Suitability** - At point of admission, students will be assessed as to whether they are of satisfactory character and suitability to be admitted as a solicitor.

# 'Functional Knowledge'

Replaces the 'foundationals'. With SIX areas of 'FN' at **SQE1**:

- Principles of Professional Conduct,
- Public & Administrative Law, and the Legal Systems of England and Wales;
- Dispute Resolution in Contract and/or Tort;
- Business Law & Practice;
- Wills & the Administration of Estates and Trusts;
- Criminal Law & Practice;
- Property Law & Practice.

# Practice Contexts

At **SQE2**, candidates must choose **TWO** 'practice contexts' from;

- Criminal Practice;
- Dispute Resolution;
- Property;
- Wills & the Administration of Estates & Trusts
- Commercial & Corporate Practice.

Students will also have to complete a period of qualifying legal work experience.

# Practice Ready?

- **Business** (encouraging commercial awareness), and;
- **Dispute Resolution** in *Contract* and *Tort* (reflecting prevailing legal services sector attitudes to the resolution of civil disputes);
- **Omissions** – poor law?

The landscape as viewed by LETR:

*“..growing student numbers, the escalating costs of qualification and difficulties in finding employment after qualification have also resulted in calls for reform of the current system of legal education and training. There is the further complication that, save in the field of corporate advice and disputes, the background against which reform falls to be considered is one of cuts in the availability of legal aid advice and representation for individuals in the vast majority of civil and family disputes and ever tightening limitations on the availability and funding of criminal legal aid..” (p.v.)*

# Questions for the Academy

- Positioning/marketing – who wants to be a solicitor?
- Do we want to prepare our students for the SQE?
- The changes may provide an opening to teach law with a **socio-legal/law in context** approach as well as **doctrinally**?

Or

- Resistance to ‘professionalization of the law degree.

*“...more radical curriculum remodelling could see [the development of] law degrees which pay little attention to the professional model and more fully embrace liberal, socio-legal or other theoretical models” (Davies, 2018)*

# What Type of Law Degree Then?

- Opportunities!
- Creating a law degree which is “*all things to all people*”;
- A Stage 1 ready law degree followed by a fourth year leading to SQE2;
- Buttressed by an American Bar type (cramming) examination;
- Clinic - to provide ‘practice ready’ solicitors?

# Challenges

- SQE Syllabus requirements will surely necessitate wholesale curriculum changes;
- Staffing?
- Scope for liberal legal education (arguably limited)?
  - “...education for education’s sake, equipping students for life and helping them to call their minds their own” (Nussbaum, 1997).
- So, if a law degree is to have something for everyone, how can we **SQEEze** it all in?

**Any Further  
Thoughts/Questions?**