Regulation and Education Authorisation and Monitoring Activity

14 January 2020

Introduction and overview of 2017/18

We have a statutory responsibility for the education and training of solicitors, as set out in the Solicitors Act 1974 and the Legal Services Act 2007. These education and training requirements play a key part in helping us to protect consumers of legal services. This report concerns our quality assurance activity in relation to education and training. Unless otherwise stated, it relates to the period 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018.

During this time, we have continued to develop the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), which all aspiring solicitors in England and Wales will need to take to qualify. Following extensive consultation, in April 2017, our Board approved proposals for the introduction of the SQE. In April 2018, the Legal Services Board approved the SQE regulations, subject to a further application, once the final form of the assessment has been designed. We appointed Kaplan as the assessment organisation for the SQE in July 2018 after a lengthy tendering process. We remain on target to introduce the SQE in Autumn 2021. A pilot of the SQE1 assessment took place in March 2019 and the results of the pilot were published. A pilot of SQE2 took place at the end of 2019.

Our new Standards and Regulations came into force on 25 November 2019. These did not make any substantive changes to the academic stage of training. But they did make changes to the vocational stage of training. Specifically, the new regulations no longer require experience of three practice areas of English and Welsh law during the period of recognised training (PRT). The requirement to satisfy the Practice Skills Standards continues. The Practice Skills Standards themselves have been revised so that they are aligned to the Statement of Solicitor Competence.

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