

A new route to qualification: The Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)

Annex 2: Rationale for assessment rules

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Proposal	Rationale
<p>Candidates can resit an individual SQE assessment that they have failed.</p> <p>Candidates will have a maximum of three attempts to pass each of the 17 SQE assessments.</p>	<p>Professional assessment models, nationally and internationally, limit the number of resits, because evidence shows that candidates do not improve with multiple resits.</p> <p>Resits significantly impact the classification error rate, and therefore the effectiveness of the test.¹</p> <p>Capping the number of resits reduces the number of candidate challenges to the assessment results and processes.</p> <p>Limiting to three attempts protects the reliability of the tests and maximises the effectiveness of the assessment by minimising the impact on the classification error rate.</p> <p>It will deter candidates from treating their first attempts as 'dummy runs'.</p>
<p>There will be a limited time period (six years) in which to pass all SQE stage 1 and stage 2 assessments.</p>	<p>This helps to maintain currency of candidates' knowledge pre-qualification. Post qualification, currency is maintained by practice and the professional obligation to stay up to date.</p> <p>This time period aligns with the apprenticeship delivery model.</p> <p>Six years is long enough to permit full and part-time candidates to complete SQE stage 1, qualifying work experience and SQE stage 2.</p>
<p>No compensation allowed across different assessments.</p> <p>Each must be passed separately.</p>	<p>The SQE is a licence to practise competence-based qualification and as such candidates are required to prove their competence, underpinning knowledge and understanding in all areas of the Assessment Specification.</p> <p>If we were to allow compensation, two candidates could both pass but exhibit very different patterns of performance. A candidate who compensates one competence test by performance in another cannot be said to be competent in that area.</p> <p>Lack of compensation increases the validity² and reliability³ of the assessment.</p>

¹http://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2001/10001/Classification_Accuracy_for_Tests_That_Allow.36.aspx#P28

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Candidates must pass all SQE stage 1 assessments before attempting SQE stage 2 assessments.	This would help candidates better progress towards and prepare for stage 2. SQE stage 1 offers a consistent platform from which candidates can progress towards stage 2.
Candidates must take all SQE stage 1 assessments in the same assessment window.	This enables consistent standards to be set by allowing the same group of candidates' performance across all assessments to be statistically analysed and compared. It would also optimise the management of the assessment.
Candidates must take all five SQE stage 2 assessments in a chosen context in the same assessment window. They may take the two contexts separately.	This enables consistent standards to be set by allowing the same group of candidates' performance across all assessments to be statistically analysed and compared. It would also optimise the management of the assessment.
Candidates must take all resits within the same assessment window.	This enables consistent standards to be set by allowing the same group of candidates' performance across all assessments to be statistically analysed and compared. It would also optimise the management of the assessment. It prevents resit candidates having an advantage by being able to spread resit attempts over different assessment windows.
Candidates who have passed an assessment are not allowed to resit in an effort to improve their pass mark. Only candidates who have failed an assessment would be able to resit.	This rule would stop more affluent candidates from taking repeated resits in an attempt to increase their employability. It will deter candidates from treating their first attempts as 'dummy runs'.

² Validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the inferences made from test scores. An assessment is valid if it measures what it claims to measure (AERA, APA, NCME, (1985). Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington DC: American Psychological Association). So, an advocacy role play in a standardised, controlled setting is more valid than writing an essay about what good advocacy involves

³ Reliability refers to whether the assessment consistently produces the same results between successive sittings and different candidates and is free from errors of measurement (ibid).