

CAREER GUIDE

# Becoming a Solicitor

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## Here's everything you need to know

Are you at university, studying law – or perhaps something else – and wondering what you should be doing now to help you get into a career as a solicitor?

Good news! There are a few simple things you can focus on right now. We'll take you through everything you need to know.

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# 14 Ways to Prepare for a Solicitor Career While in University

## Familiarise yourself with the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) requirements

The route to qualify as a solicitor has changed, opening up the profession to aspiring solicitors from all backgrounds. You no longer need to land a training contract in order to qualify, and if you're a non-law graduate, you don't have to do a conversion course, such as a Graduate Diploma of Law (GDL), any longer. Now, all you need is a degree (or equivalent, such as an apprenticeship), and two years of Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) in any of a wide range of positions.

Here's a helpful guide to understanding the SQE:

[About the Solicitors Qualifying Exam \(SQE\)](#)

A guide to understand the Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) requirement: [Qualifying Work Experience](#)

And we answer your commonly asked questions:

[FAQs about the SQE](#)

## Join your university's student law society

Engage with your legal community from day one. If you have not already done so, do not hesitate to enquire as most law societies at university are keen to gain members.

## Continue to work hard at your academic studies

Your first-year grades matter to law firms as much as your second and final year grades do. Recruiters ideally look for holistic candidates AND they want to see consistent exemplary grades.





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## Extracurricular activities

Engage with some of the extracurricular options at university (eg, mooting, debating, writing for the student newsletter or intranet, sport or music). This makes you a well-rounded student and opens the doors to meet more people and widen your network.

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## Try to secure work experience (legal or non-legal)

Volunteer at your university's law clinic, if there is one. This not only gives you great exposure and networking opportunities with local legal professionals and firms, but it can also count towards your QWE requirement. [See more ways to find work experience below.](#)

Finding a non-legal part-time job can also help to build your transferable skills, such as customer/client service, good communication skills, project management and time-management skills.

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## Look after your mental health

All of this should, however, not come at the expense of your wellbeing and mental health. Prioritise selfcare and find time to have fun while at university.

- Download the BARBRI Be Well app, filled with advice and an anonymous chat with Bailey
- We created a Wellbeing Guide for you. **Download:** [Wellbeing Guide](#)
- For more wellbeing resources, click here: [LawCare](#)



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## Make use of your university's careers service

Be proactive and regularly consult your university's careers service – it's there to help you and, more importantly, you pay for it! Some universities have dedicated legal career advisors that can assist in identifying suitable legal employers and law firms.



08

## Get support as a minority student

There is a well-reported lack of diversity in the legal profession. Fortunately, this is changing. There are incredible organisations that wish to change the trend and offer career and employability support to minority students. Here are a few you can reach out to:

Rare Recruitment

GROW Mentoring

Aspiring Solicitors

STRIVE Talent

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## Polish your LinkedIn profile

Create and update your LinkedIn profile and post regularly, even if it is only once a term. Active engagement on LinkedIn is crucial to developing your personal brand and profile – ultimately, your marketability to a firm or organisation. Also follow our [SQE Future Lawyers](#) group on LinkedIn to network and engage with others in the industry.

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## Grow your commercial awareness

This is something you'll hear about often as you start looking for a job post-degree. You should always be developing your commercial awareness whether in term time or in the summer. [We have detailed a few ways you can do so below.](#)

## Get to know the SQE1 multiple-choice question format

You can start familiarising yourself with the way the multiple-choice questions (MCQs) are asked in the SQE exam – these are very different to what you're used to at university. At BARBRI we understand this format inside and out and our SQE1 Prep course offers you more than 3,200 practice questions, with detailed explanations.

If you'd like to test-drive our MCQs, then sign up to SQE Edge, our free taster for university students like you. Click here: [SQE Edge](#)

## Thinking of doing a postgrad course first?

If you're the academic type who first wants to do a Master's degree, you can choose to either continue straight on with your studies or take some time out to gain work experience. If you are considering doing your Master's, have a look at the SQE programmes of universities BARBRI has partnered with, offering you SQE1 prep and a master's degree at the end of a year.

Read more here: [The SQE and University Students](#)





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## Get a head start

Our free HeadStart careers platform has tons of articles, webinars and industry advice to support you in your early legal career journey. It is the mini version of our full CareerHub available to our SQE Prep students.

**Sign up for free here:** Register for your free account by selecting

→ *“HeadStart for prospective students”.*

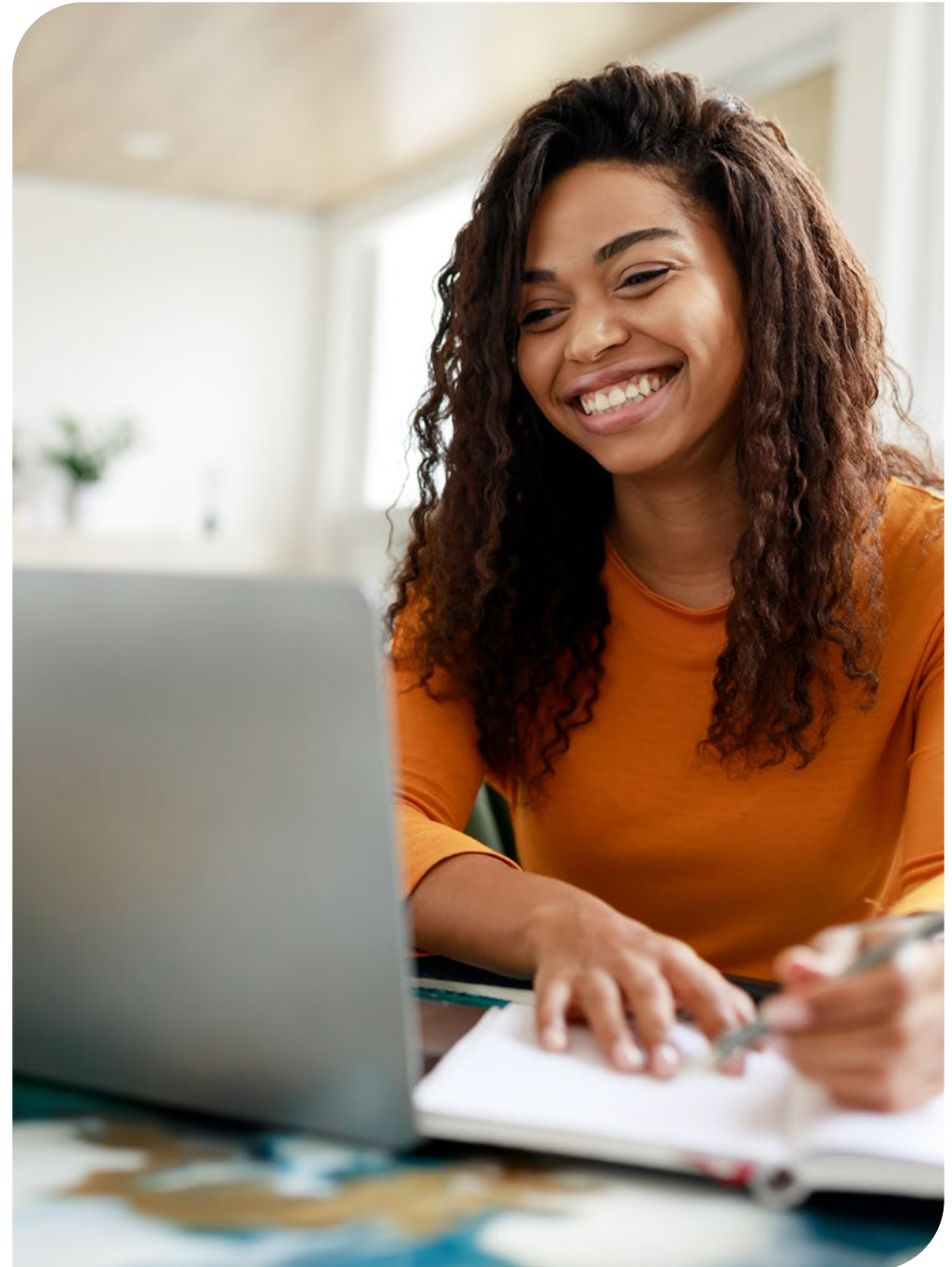
[Career Hub](#)[Read More](#)

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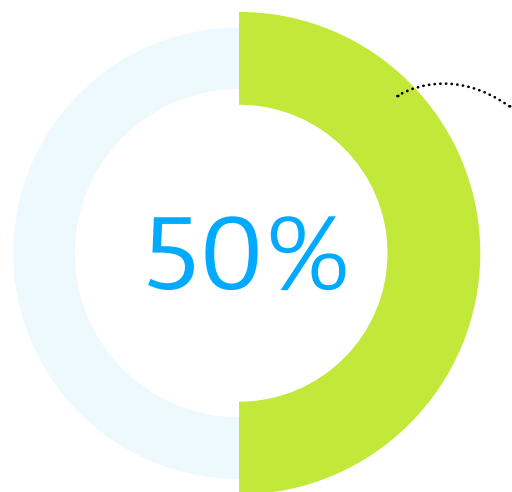
## Get ready to enrol on your SQE1 Prep journey

You can apply for the SQE1 preparation course as soon as you have your results. We offer flexible online courses with ultimate one-to-one support!

**Find out all about BARBRI's comprehensive SQE Prep courses here:**

[The SQE with BARBRI](#)

# Non-Law Student? No Problem



Most firms hire an almost equal 50/50 split of law and non-law students, as non-law students often bring a diverse set of skills and experience.

The good news is that with the SQE route to qualification, non-law graduates no longer need to do a conversion course – you can continue straight to preparing for the SQE exams.

If you first want to catch up on the common law system and legal terminology before embarking on the SQE, BARBRI offers the optional 6-week [Foundations in Law course](#), which is available online and on-demand or bundled with a SQE1 Prep course. We also recommend taking our [flexible 40-week SQE1 Prep course](#), which gives you maximum time to embed the learning before the exam.

**One more thing:** If you're a non-law student in the final year of your degree, you should apply for vacation schemes and training contracts now. [See more below.](#)

**Find out more about becoming a solicitor without a law degree, here:** [Can I Become a Solicitor Without a Law Degree?](#)



## Employability Advice for International Students

Over 25% of our student body is located outside of the UK. To help support you, we have created a guide to employability, covering facts and resources around work experience and visa requirements, and useful links.

To access, click here: [International Student Advice](#)



Thorough law firm research is essential to help you be more successful with your applications for Qualifying Work Experience (QWE).

1

Firstly, think about what practice areas you're interested in. Get a feel for the wide variety of practice areas available. Read: [Legal Practice Areas You Can Specialise In](#)

2

Next, think about the type of firm (eg Magic Circle, high street, boutique or international) you want to work at, and the clients the firm works with. Check out [LawCareers.Net](#), a great resource that has in-depth law firm profiles that can assist in your research. Research law firms and make a shortlist of your desired firms.

3

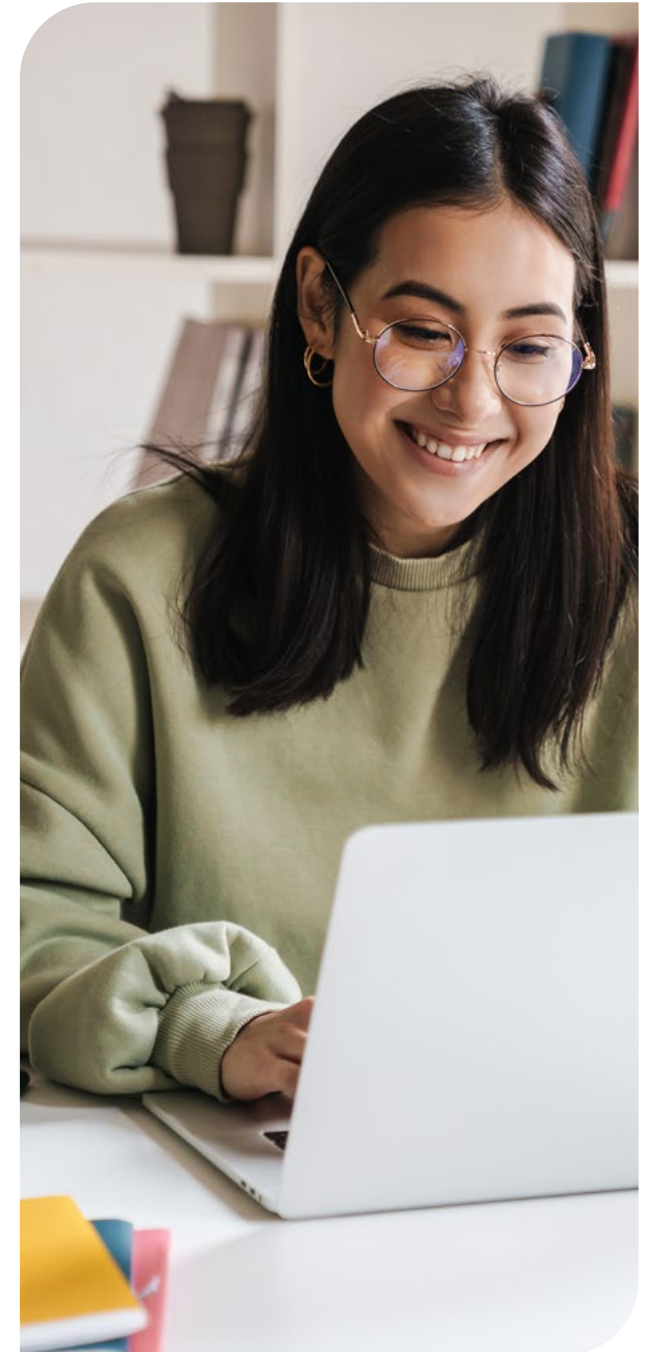
Go to law fairs and law firm presentations and open days to meet people face to face. Use these opportunities to create a network that you can later leverage when you're preparing your vacation scheme, training contract or paralegal applications.

For more info on how to network, read here: [10 Tips To Help You Network Like a Pro.](#)

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We offer a short, online course and regular masterclasses to help you develop your networking, commercial awareness and other business skills.

Click here to learn more: Legal Life Skills: [Business Skills Courses](#)



# Where to Look for Qualifying Work Experience

Any legal experience you complete between now and taking the SQE exams could count towards QWE. Check the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)'s requirements for Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) to ensure you can get your work experience signed off.

Here's our guide to understanding the QWE requirement:

[Qualifying Work Experience](#)

And see more information on the SRA's website:

[Solicitors Regulating Authority \(SRA\)](#)

Look for vacancies for these types of opportunities:



## Vacation schemes

Many law firms offer summer vacation schemes, inviting you to apply to spend a week or two – up to a month – at their office to improve your knowledge and skills. You'll meet many lawyers in the industry and having such experience on your CV is very valuable.

Apply for vacation schemes at your shortlisted firms in your second or final year. An important date for your diary is 31 January, when many law firms set their spring/summer vacation scheme deadlines.



## Paralegal work

There are many other ways of gaining the necessary two-year QWE. For instance, organisations with in-house legal teams recruit paralegals from graduates, and some alternative legal service providers (ALSPs) and government departments also offer paralegal jobs (and sometimes even training contracts).



## Training contracts

Many top law firms offer training contracts: typically, this means they offer to pay for your SQE1 and SQE2 prep studies and give you a two-year work contract. Competition is fierce and you will want to put your best foot forward in these applications, and show top grades, whether you're a law or non-law graduate.



## Pro-bono work

QWE includes pro-bono legal work, such as working at your university's law clinic or a Citizens Advice Bureau. Always check with the employer whether the work you're about to do qualifies as QWE.

# Top Tips for Applying at Law Firms + Organisations

Follow these tips to help you create a successful application:



Remember to research the law firms or organisations you want to apply at, plus the profiles of the graduate recruitment team and the partners and associates of your ideal department within the firm. It never hurts to strike up a conversation – you would be surprised how many lawyers are open books and willing to aid a potential candidate.



Work with your university careers adviser on your application and interview technique.



Tailor your applications to each firm or organisation you apply to. 'Copy and paste' applications are obvious to the recruiters and will not secure you a training contract or work experience. Look at the specific set of skills and requirement they ask for, and make sure your application matches their needs.



Most applications ask you to include your LinkedIn profile URL, and it may be viewed, so do make sure your profile is updated.



Each firm or organisation has different generative AI usage policies for applications. Some forbid the use of AI, while some others require you to make a disclaimer if any amount of AI was used in the making of the application – this could be spellcheckers like Grammarly. Using AI when the applications state you're not allowed to may result in your application being flagged and unsuccessful.



It is helpful to use a Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets spreadsheet to organise your deadlines and track your applications and any correspondence. Being organised will make your life easier during periods when you will have multiple application deadlines looming and demanding university coursework all at once.



# How to Develop Your Commercial Awareness

It is expected of any candidate to not just read the news, but to analyse it and be able to competently communicate about the trending commercial issues. Making this a habit will only better your global perspective and enhance your applications.

Here are a few ways:



## Keep up with the business and finance sections of newspapers

Examples are the Financial Times or The Economist. Reading these regularly will improve your commercial awareness. Make note of any interesting developments that pique your interest – this is often a sign of an area of law that may be suitable for you in the future.



## Read legal industry publications and the law sections of the broadsheet newspapers

Read legal industry publications like The Lawyer or Legal Cheek, and the dedicated law sections and supplements in newspapers like The Guardian and The Times. Start to understand the legal market and its trends sooner rather than later – you will gain perspective that may serve you well when the time comes to apply for work experience.



## Reports and white papers

Read law firms' quarterly reports or white paper publications from their websites, and The Law Society's industry reports. Often these are 'horizon scanning' reports on new or upcoming legislation and its impact on a sector. Understanding these papers not only bolsters your academic knowledge of a particular area of law, but if you can tease out in an application how this relates to a firm's business, then you may have a very compelling application.



# Graduated? Congratulations!

All your hard work has paid off and you're now ready to move on to preparing for the SQE exams. To help you prepare, we provide the following courses:

## Foundations in Law:

This course has been designed for non-law students who will be studying for the SQE with BARBRI. It's an **optional** six-week course that can be bundled with the SQE1 Prep course. You can also choose to take it as a standalone course, now, available to join on demand.

Foundations in Law Course

## SQE1 Prep:

This prep course leads straight into the SQE1 examinations, which are scheduled to take place twice a year. The intensive 10-week Accelerated course is aimed at recent law graduates, while the 20-week Focused and 40-week Flexible options are recommended for non-law graduates, those working full time, or internationally qualified lawyers, who need a bit more time.

SQE1 Preparation Course

SQE1 Prep Preview

## SQE2 Prep:

After you have passed the SQE1 exam, you can prepare for the SQE2 practical skills assessments. At BARBRI, we offer an intensive 10-week Accelerated course for those wishing to qualify as soon as possible, and a 20-week Flexible option for those who need a bit more time for whatever reason.

SQE2 Preparation Course

SQE2 Prep Preview



# How We Support You



## Funding Options

We offer various ways to fund your SQE prep studies, from interest-free payment plans to scholarships and study loans.

Funding Options



## Student Support

We support our BARBRI SQE Prep students in various ways, including unlimited calls with a learning or performance coach.

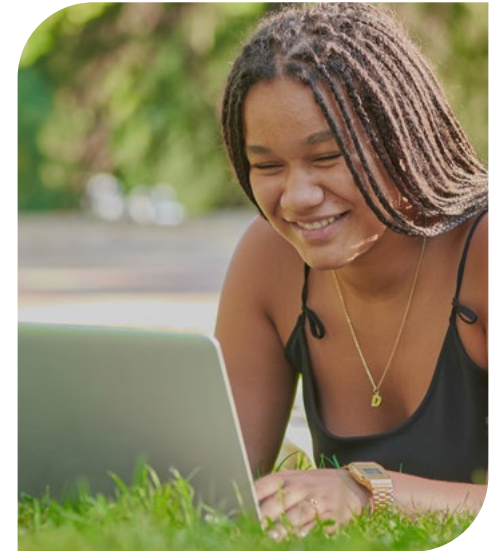
Student Support



## Employability Support and Alumni Network

We offer comprehensive employability support to our SQE1 Prep students.

Employability Support



## Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

Your wellbeing is very important to us. These are the ways in which we support your physical and mental wellbeing.

Wellbeing and Mental Health Support



## Accessibility

Our learning platform offers accessibility features to help all students get the most out of our materials.

Accessibility Features



Download our prospectus for full details:

[BARBRI SQE Prep Prospectus](#)



# What Our Students Say About Us



## Wonderful experience

"The personal study plan is fantastic, tailored to your needs. The teachers are competent and clear and the BARBRI staff are welcoming and reassuring."

Alessia G

## If I could give 6 stars I would

"BARBRI were fantastic every step of the way. The lectures were clear, the books were excellent and well-structured, and the feedback and work I had on the mock exams for both parts of the SQE was phenomenal. I've been recommending them to everyone since I started the course with them."

Tom

## Would recommend

"BARBRI have some great tutors and very helpful example questions, would recommend!"

Anonymous

# Do You Have Any Questions?

## About employability:

Reach out to us at: [sqecareers@barbri.com](mailto:sqecareers@barbri.com)

## About the SQE and BARBRI:

[Request More Information](#)



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[SQE Future Lawyers](#)