

PUBLISHED ON: 1 April 2019

UPDATED ON: 14 August 2019

A. ACADEMIC COMPONENT

Completion of the academic component will provide students with the required legal knowledge and understanding of the law of England and Wales.

Contact: [Authorisations Team](#)

A6. Stale qualifications - Applications

This section includes information on the time limit for progression to the vocational component after completion of the academic component and the process to reactivate qualifications which have become 'stale'.

Overview

- 1 Students proceeding to the vocational component must be able to rely upon legal knowledge which is reasonably current. For this reason, both law degrees and GDL courses have a time limit after which they are regarded as 'stale'.
- 2 The vocational component must be commenced within **five years** of completion of the academic component, whether by means of a law degree or GDL. The same time limit applies to any of the foundations of legal knowledge subjects passed individually following the award of a **Certificate of Partial Exemption** (see **Part 2A (A5)** of the [Bar Qualification Manual](#)).
- 3 Anyone who wishes to qualify as a barrister after this five-year period has elapsed is required to reactivate their stale qualifications, usually by undertaking the whole of the GDL.

Application – reactivation of stale qualifications

- 4 In exceptional circumstances, the BSB may reactivate stale qualifications without requiring completion of the GDL. It will only do so where there is reliable evidence from an impartial and professional source that an applicant has kept their knowledge of all of the foundations of legal knowledge subjects up to date, eg through further legal study or relevant employment.
- 5 Generally, the BSB will not grant reactivation of qualifications that are eight years old or more.
 - [Reactivation of Stale Qualifications – Application Form](#)
 - [Reactivation of Stale Qualifications – Application Guidelines](#)

Future requirements...

As the BSB and the SRA are taking divergent approaches to qualification as barristers and solicitors, the [Joint Statement](#) will cease to apply to either profession in the future. There is more information about these changes - and what they mean if you want to become either a barrister or a solicitor - in the **Common Protocol on the Academic Component of training** (see Part 2A (A7) of the [Bar Qualification Manual](#)), which we have published jointly with the SRA.

In order to become a barrister, the requirement to complete the academic component of Bar training will not change. Depending on which of the approved pathways is offered by an Authorised Education and Training Organisation (AETO), this component may be integrated with the vocational component, rather than taken sequentially.

For those wishing to qualify as barristers, the current requirements will remain in force for QLD/GDL courses that start in (or before) the **2018/19** academic year and will last until students on those courses complete their studies.

2019/20 Academic Year

- The SRA will continue to administer the academic component of education and training for solicitors and barristers on behalf of both regulators.
- The concept of a QLD for the purpose of Bar training will no longer apply to law degree courses starting in (or after) the 2019/20 academic year.
- The Bar will remain a graduate-only profession, with a minimum classification of lower second class honours (2:2). Students who do not meet the minimum standard must apply to the BSB for the **exercise of discretion**.
- Students will be required to obtain a UK degree, awarded at Level 6 (or above) of the '*Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*', by a recognised degree-awarding body. If this is a law degree, it must be compliant with the QAA benchmark statement for law. If the degree is in another subject, students must complete the GDL.
- Students who do not obtain a UK degree of the required standard must verify the equivalence of their qualifications or experience by obtaining a **Certificate of Academic Standing** from the BSB.
- Acceptable UK law degrees and GDL courses must cover the foundations of legal knowledge subjects and the skills associated with graduate legal work (e.g. legal research).

2020/21 Academic Year

- The SRA will continue to administer the academic component of education and training for solicitors only.
- The concept of a QLD for the purpose of Bar training will no longer apply to vocational component courses starting in (or after) the 2020/21 academic year.

2021/22 Academic Year

- The SRA will cease to be involved in the approval or recognition of new QLD/CPE courses that start in or after the 2021/22 academic year, following the introduction of the **Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)**.
- Subject to further detail from the SRA in due course, we intend to allow some equivalence for part-qualified solicitors. For example, we expect that passing the SQE Stage One (which incorporates knowledge of the foundations of legal knowledge subjects) should be sufficient as an equivalent to the academic component of Bar training. This, we think, should aid students in deciding what law programme to attend, meaning that they could postpone decisions on their eventual career intentions.