

# Education and training authorisation and monitoring activity September 2023 - August 2024

September 2025

## Introduction and overview of 2023-24

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. Our education and training requirements are a key regulatory tool to protect consumers of legal services.

This report summarises our quality assurance activity in relation to the Legal Practice Course (LPC) route to qualification. This is usually done by obtaining a qualifying law degree or Common Professional Examination (CPE) /Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), an LPC and a period of recognised training. Unless otherwise stated, the report relates to the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024.

In 2021, the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) replaced the LPC route to qualification. However, we have transitional regulations in place for anyone who had begun studying or training at this time so they can continue to qualify through the LPC route. Consequently, people could be qualifying through the LPC route for some years, potentially until 2032.

The number of LPC providers still enrolling new students dropped to 17 in 2023 from 25 in 2022. Moreover, we expect most courses to come to an end in 2025. This is because only a few providers have chosen to extend their authorisation and offer new courses beginning in 2026.

We will continue to monitor the LPC as a route qualification and to report on our activities for as long as the numbers qualifying this way remain high enough for us to do so.

This report provides headline figures for those seeking to qualify as a solicitor, focusing solely on the information received from LPC providers for the academic year 2023/2024. Admission numbers and broader qualification trends will be covered in more detail in the annual Education and Training Corporate Report, which will be published later this year.

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## **Key findings**

The number of students enrolled on the LPC fell significantly in this reporting year, decreasing from 12,227 to 8,085. This decline coincides with a rise in the number of candidates taking the SQE. Comparisons with previous years should be viewed in light of this shift.



It is likely that the LPC cohort in 2023/24 is not only smaller in number but also different in composition. This is likely down to a combination of factors, including more firms sponsoring students to pursue the SQE, and more aspiring solicitors choosing the SQE route for themselves.

Successful completion rates for the LPC dropped to 42% in 2023/24, down from 57% in 2022/23. Over the past five years, completion rates have fluctuated between 48% and 58%.

The number of students referring/deferring increased to the highest level recorded - 46% from 34% the previous year, the. Additionally, 12% of students either exhausted all permitted resit attempts and failed or withdrew from or suspended their LPC studies. This is a rise from 1% in 2022/23.

Significant differences in successful completion rates between providers persisted, ranging from 26% to 100%. Various factors, such as student ability, engagement, teaching quality and assessment arrangements may influence these rates, but firm conclusions cannot be drawn from the available data. The wide differences in completion rates between providers and the lack of a standardised assessment taken by all aspiring solicitors were key reasons for our introduction of the SQE.

The data received suggests students from ethnic backgrounds other than White continue to have lower successful completion rates on the LPC. Compared to the previous academic year (2022/23), rates have declined across all groups, most notably among students from Black, Asian and mixed ethnic backgrounds. These disparities reflect broader patterns seen across higher education and professional assessments. To explore the underlying causes of these differential outcomes, we [commissioned research \[sra/research-publications/potential-causes-differential-outcomes-legal-professional-assessments/\] from the University of Exeter, published in June 2024. We are taking action to address the identified causes that are within our influence.](#)

Male students had a slightly higher successful completion rate of 43% compared to 41% for female students. Female students outnumbered male students on the LPC, as they do at the point of admission to the profession.

## **SRA Monitoring**

The LPC can only be delivered by organisations we have authorised to do so. When monitoring the quality and standards of education and training, each provider must submit to us an annual course report. This consists of monitoring data and a narrative account of the previous year.

We use these reports as a basis for our quality assurance activities. If we identify issues, we follow this up with the provider and may also visit a provider.

## **Legal Practice Course**

### **LPC results by provider**



Successful completion rates by provider vary from 26% to 100%. In addition to varying rates, there is significant difference between providers in terms of the students obtaining 'pass', 'commendation' and 'distinction' grades. The reasons for such a wide disparity in grades awarded are unclear.

There are large differences in the size of course providers and the number of students enrolled on their LPCs. Cohorts range from fewer than ten students to thousands of students, spread over multiple locations.

The largest providers, BPP University and The University of Law, offer the LPC across multiple locations. Between them, they shared approximately 82% of the total number of students enrolled to take assessments (84% in 2022/23).

## **LPC results by gender**

Our data shows 71% of students in this cohort were female, 29% were male.

There was little difference in successful completion rates between male and female students, with 43% of male students and 41% of female students completing the course. Male and female students continued to receive similar rates of 'pass', 'commendation' and 'distinction' awards.

## **LPC results by ethnicity**

For the reporting period 2023/24, the data shows that:

- 26% of students identified themselves as Asian/Asian British, compared to 23% in 2022/23
- 12% of students identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, compared to 10% in 2022/23
- 8% of students 'preferred not to say', the same as in 2022/23
- 5% of students identified as being from Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, the same as in 2022/23
- successful completion rates of the LPC, which have dropped for each ethnicity group, were:
  - 51% of students who identified themselves as White, compared to 63% in 2022/23
  - 35% of students who identified themselves as being from mixed/multiple ethnic groups, compared to 55% in 2022/23
  - 33% of students who identified themselves as being Asian/Asian British, compared to 49% in 2022/23
  - 24% of students who identified themselves as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, compared to 41% in 2022/23.

## **LPC results by disability**

For the reporting period 2023/24, the data shows that:

- 24% of students reported having a disability, compared to 21% in 2022/23
- 4% of students preferred not to say, compared to 6% in 2022/23
- Successful completion rates, by declared disability, were:
  - 34% of students who declared a disability, compared to 49% in 2022/23
  - 45% of students who did not declaring a disability, compared to 59% in 2022/23
  - 36% of students who preferred not to say, compared to 51% in 2022/23.

As in previous years, there was a noticeable gap in completion rates between students who declared a disability and those who did not. Rates declined across all groups compared to the previous year, with students who declared a disability continuing to have lower completion rates than their peers. No additional information was provided by course providers to explain the lower outcomes for students with disabilities.

This data does not necessarily reflect the proportion of students who had special arrangements or reasonable adjustments for their learning and/or assessments.

## **LPC results by socio-economic categories**

For the reporting period 2023/24, the data shows that:

- 43% of students reported they had attended state-run/state-funded schools, the same as in 2022/23
- 6% of students reported they had attended an independent or fee-paying school, compared to 8% in 2022/23
- 39% of responses were 'unknown', compared to 23% in 2022/23, making it difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these figures. This only includes responses left unanswered and does not include responses of 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say'
- successful completion rates, by type of school attended, were:
  - 51% of students from independent schools completed, compared to 71% in 2022/23
  - 41% of students from state-run schools completed, compared to 55% in 2022/23
  - 35% of students who were educated outside the UK completed, compared to 55% in 2022/23.

As in previous years, there was a difference observed in completion rates by the type of school attended by students. Rates declined across all groups compared to the previous year. As before, students who attended a state school had lower completion rates than peers who attended an independent school.



In previous years, we included students who reported that they were home schooled. In 2023/24, the numbers were too low to report. Because of the low numbers, comparisons with other groups cannot be drawn.

For the reporting period 2023/24, the data shows that:

- 45% of students reported having at least one parent or guardian with at least one degree level qualification, compared to 68% in 2022/23
- approximately 7% reported having no parent or guardian with formal qualifications, compared to 0.5% in 2022/23
- 8% of students reported having a parent or guardian with qualification below degree level.
- 39% of responses were 'unknown', compared to 23% in 2022/23, making it difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these figures. This only includes responses left unanswered and does not include responses of 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say'.
- successful completion rates, by parent/guardian qualifications, were as follows:
  - 42% among students with parent/guardian holding at least one degree-level qualification, compared to 56% in 2022/23
  - 37% among students with parent/guardian having qualifications below degree level, compared to 58% in 2022/23
  - 32% among students with parent/guardian having no formal qualifications, compared to 54% in 2022/23.

Completion rates declined across all groups compared to the previous year. The group with the most significant difference to last year were students whose parent/guardian had no formal qualifications.

## Summary of narrative reports

All LPC providers must provide us with an annual report on their course delivery. In addition to this, they appoint external examiners to review the quality and standards of their assessments. Each provider appoints its own external examiners who report to the LPC provider (rather than to us).

In their report, providers include a summary and analysis of issues raised by the external examiners and the provider's response to those issues. We also ask providers to send copies of the external examiners' reports to us.

Although we prescribe a template for the report, there are differences in the amount of information included by different providers.

Overall, the external examiners were largely positive about LPC quality and standards in the reporting period and highlighted the:

- quality and consistency of marking and moderation
- appropriateness of assessment processes in measuring achievement against intended learning outcomes
- required standard of learning and teaching strategies and materials
- time taken to provide feedback to students.

Providers told us they have informed students about the timeframes for completing the LPC within the transitional arrangements and when their programmes are closing. They also indicated that they would continue to deliver revision support and assessments to help students complete their programmes.

Providers reported a reduction in the number of elective modules offered due to the wind down of the LPC. They reported that they will continue to offer pastoral care and career guidance to all LPC students until they have completed their assessments.

## **Periods of recognised training**

The final stage of the qualification pathway is the requirement to complete a period of recognised training (PRT) during which trainees must also undertake the Professional Skills Course (PSC). This training, often referred to as a 'training contract', takes place in a firm or organisation that we have approved to take trainees. If a PRT is done on a full-time basis, it will usually for two years but other arrangements may be drawn up, for example, for part time trainees.

The number of PRTs registered with us in 2023/24 was 5,975. Figure 7 shows that while there has been a slight decline in overall PRT numbers compared to the previous two years, the trend remains stable when viewed across the five-year period.

We expect it to drop as aspiring solicitor who take the SQE do not need to have a PRT registered as they do qualifying work experience instead.

The figures shown are for the start of a PRT. Some individuals may not complete the PRT or may start more than one PRT. This accounts for a small difference in the total number of PRTs registered and the numbers for those being admitted to the roll, having successfully completed the LPC and a PRT. Data for previous years is refreshed at the point a trainee is admitted so there may be some minor differences when compared to previous reports.

Figure 7 also shows PRT data by trainee age at the time of registering PRT. Percentages are based on the total known population. This data shows the spread of ages for trainees undertaking PRT. For 2023/24, 88% of the PRTs registered with us were for trainees aged 30 or under.

|            | <b>2019/20</b> |          | <b>2020/21</b> |          | <b>2021/22</b> |          | <b>2022/23</b> |          | <b>2024/25</b> |          |
|------------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| <b>Age</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Count</b>   | <b>%</b> |
| 18 - 21    | 31             | 1%       | 44             | 1%       | 46             | 1%       | 53             | 1%       | 59             | 1%       |
| 22 - 25    | 3,509          | 58%      | 3,380          | 57%      | 3,905          | 57%      | 3,977          | 58%      | 3,387          | 57%      |
| 26 - 30    | 1,790          | 58%      | 1,813          | 30%      | 2,102          | 31%      | 2,137          | 31%      | 1,802          | 30%      |
| 31 - 35    | 377            | 6%       | 379            | 6%       | 398            | 6%       | 381            | 6%       | 389            | 7%       |
| 36 - 40    | 154            | 3%       | 152            | 3%       | 175            | 3%       | 165            | 2%       | 161            | 3%       |
| 41 - 45    | 85             | 1%       | 106            | 2%       | 102            | 1%       | 80             | 1%       | 85             | 1%       |
| 46 - 50    | 54             | 1%       | 47             | 1%       | 56             | 1%       | 50             | 1%       | 54             | 1%       |

|                  |       |      |       |      |       |      |       |      |       |      |
|------------------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 51 - 55          | 22    | 0%   | 22    | 0%   | 36    | 1%   | 21    | 0%   | 24    | 0%   |
| 56+              | 14    | 0%   | 15    | 0%   | 15    | 0%   | 14    | 0%   | 14    | 0%   |
| Total known      | 6,036 | 100% | 5,959 | 100% | 6,835 | 100% | 6,878 | 100% | 5,975 | 100% |
| Declaration rate | 100%  |      | 100%  |      | 100%  |      | 100%  |      | 100%  |      |
| Unknown          | 7     | 0%   | 3     | 0%   | 3     | 0%   | 1     | 0%   | 0     | 0%   |
| Total            | 6,043 | 100% | 5,962 | 100% | 6,838 | 100% | 6,879 | 100% | 5,975 | 100% |

## Qualifying through equivalent means

Since the introduction of the SRA Training Regulations 2014, applicants may apply to have their qualifications and experience assessed against the academic or vocational requirements of training by an equivalent means application.

We may recognise prior learning and grant exemptions where:

- the level, standard, volume and content of prior learning achieved is equivalent to all or part of a stage of education and training and
- there is relevant, sufficient and adequate evidence of such achievement.

We may also grant exemptions based on prior experiential learning. The key principle here is that we will recognise the achievement of learning and outcomes and not simply evidence that an applicant has had experience of doing something.

The number of those qualifying with part of their training satisfied through equivalent means has decreased slightly relative to the previous two years. We decide on equivalent means following our assessment of applicants' workplace experience and/or qualifications and whether these are equivalent to the relevant academic and/or vocational stage requirements.

Figure 8 shows the number of individuals who qualified with part of their training satisfied through equivalent means for the period from 2016/17 to 2023/24.

Individuals on the LPC route will continue to be able to apply to qualify through equivalent means during the transition period.

### **Figure 8: Number of individuals who qualified through equivalent means 2016/17 to 2022/23**

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| <b>2016/17</b> | 71  |
| <b>2017/18</b> | 85  |
| <b>2018/19</b> | 88  |
| <b>2019/20</b> | 99  |
| <b>2020/21</b> | 109 |
| <b>2021/22</b> | 114 |

**2022/23** 110

**2023/24** 106

Figures show above are for SRA financial year, which run from 1 November to 31 October. Figures for 2022/23 and 2019/20 have been updated to 110 and 99, respectively, to align with the Education and Training Corporate Annual Report.