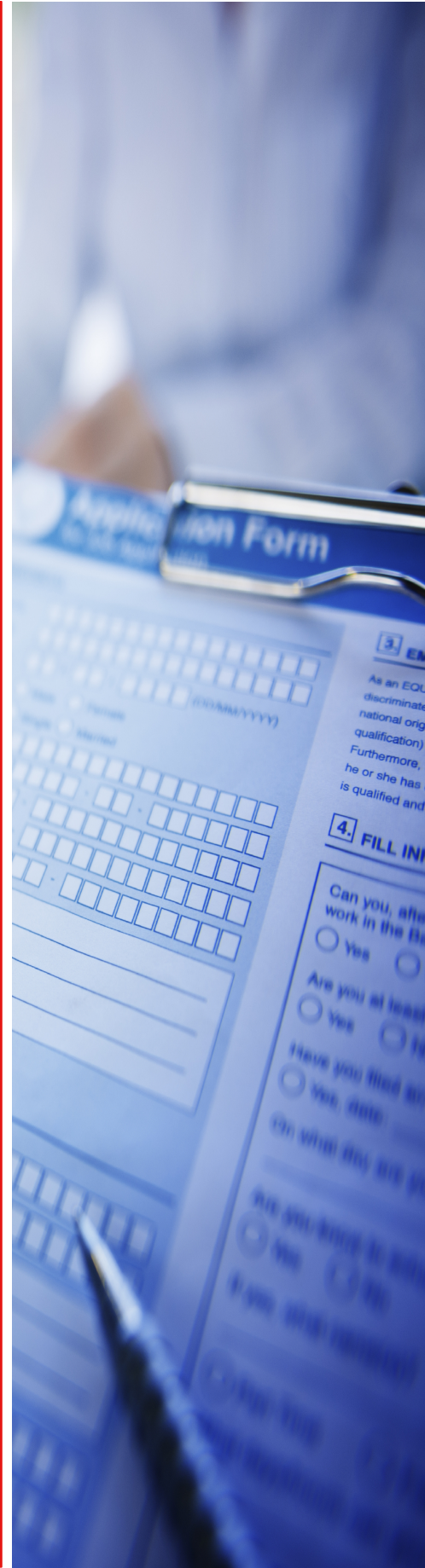


The City of London Law Society Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF)

"Delivering front-line social welfare solicitors"

Eligibility Criteria



The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2026

Please note that the SWSQF 2026 is only open to those ready to start the Solicitors Qualification Exam (SQE) in 2026

To be eligible to apply for the SWSQF, the applicant will be required to confirm and provide evidence to support (where stated in the Guidance for Applicants Document) the following:

Working in Social Welfare Law

For the purposes of this section 1, social welfare law is as defined in section 1.4.

- 1.1** The applicant is currently working in, has a signed contract to work in, or a signed training contract to work in an organisation where the work of that organisation enables the applicant to meet the minimum 70% focus on social welfare law outlined in sections 1.2 and 1.3 below. That employment is paid or, in the case of future employment, will be paid.
- 1.2** Consistently on average at least 70% of the applicant's current work (or, if contracted to work in the future, will upon joining) focus on social welfare law.
- 1.3** It is anticipated that consistently on average at least 70% of the applicant's work will continue to focus on social welfare law during their SQE and for two years after their SQE qualification has been gained and the applicant has been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales.
- 1.4** Social welfare law consists of legal representation for low-income, disadvantaged communities; provided to individuals. Examples of practice areas include:
 - 1.4.1** Actions against public authorities
 - 1.4.2** Crime
 - 1.4.3** Debt
 - 1.4.4** Community care
 - 1.4.5** Discrimination
 - 1.4.6** Education
 - 1.4.7** Employment
 - 1.4.8** Family
 - 1.4.9** Housing
 - 1.4.10** Immigration
 - 1.4.11** Inquests
 - 1.4.12** Mental health
 - 1.4.13** Welfare benefits
- 1.5** The applicant agrees to promptly informing SWSQF@cls.org, SWSQF Committee and BARBRI should there be any changes to their employment, during the application process and/or after funding has been awarded. This would include (and not limited to) change in

employer, type of social welfare work carried out by the applicant or decision to leave the social welfare sector entirely. The applicant understands such changes may make them ineligible for the fund and/or may be required to pay back any funding received.

Educational Qualifications

The applicant must have one of the following:

- 2.1 A UK degree awarded at Level 6 (or above) by a recognised degree-awarding body. This is usually an undergraduate degree but can also be diplomas or other qualifications
- 2.2 An equivalent UK qualification. These are:
 - 2.2.1 An accredited qualification at level 6 (or above) of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, awarded by a recognised degree-awarding body
 - 2.2.2 A regulated qualification at level 6 (or above) of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). This includes CILEx level 6 qualifications
 - 2.2.3 An apprenticeship at level 6 or above, approved by the government departments of England, Wales or Northern Ireland
 - 2.2.4 A qualification or apprenticeship at level 9 or above of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) or awarded by a Scottish degree awarding body.
- 2.3 An overseas qualification:
 - 2.3.1 Shown to be equivalent to either a UK degree/equivalent qualification through a UK NARIC Statement of Comparability; or
 - 2.3.2 An accredited qualification at level 6 (or above) of the European Qualifications.

Financial Criteria

Applicants are required to confirm:

- 3.1 At the time of application and for those applying for SQE1 and 2, when starting the SQE 1 preparation course and for those only applying for SQE2, when starting the SQE 2 preparation course:
 - 3.1.1 They do not have access to familial loans or financial gifts exceeding £11,500 in total.
 - 3.1.2 They do not have more than £21,500 in their savings account, current account, ISA or held elsewhere.
- 3.2 Their current salary at point of application:
 - 3.2.1 Applicants currently earning in excess of £45,000 (in London) or £38,000 (outside London) are not eligible for the SWSQF unless
 - (i) in receipt of Universal Credit and/or Working Tax Credits, and
 - (ii) your salary is not in excess of £45,000 (in London) or £38,000 (outside London).
 - 3.2.2 Applications from applicants currently earning

- (i) (in London) between £40,000 and £45,000 (inclusive) or
- (ii) (outside London) between £32,500 and £38,000 (inclusive) or
- (iii) who are earning more than that but are also in receipt of Universal Credit and/or Working Tax Credits (and your salary is not in excess of £45,000 (in London) and £38,000 (outside London))

3.3 They are able to meet all expenses incurred in undertaking the SQE (other than tuition and exam fees) during the course of study, including for any dependents.

SQE and Qualification

The applicant must confirm that they are:

4.1 Seeking to start the SQE preparation course and Assessment on the agreed dates.

4.1.1 For those applying for SQE1 and 2 start the SQE preparation course in April 2026 and sit the SQE part 1 assessment in January 2027. Seeking to start the SQE 2 preparation course in May 2027 and sit the SQE part 2 before the end of October 2027, completion of both SQE 1 and 2 envisaged to be achieved within a two-year period.

4.1.2 For those applying for SQE2 only start the SQE preparation course in May 2026 and sit the SQE2 part 1 assessment in October 2026.

4.2 Committed to completing the SQE course (parts 1 and 2) and QWE and practising as a social welfare lawyer in accordance with section 1.

4.3 Confident in their ability to put in place arrangements to work and study at the same time to enable them to pass SQE parts 1 and 2 at the first attempt. The Fund does not anticipate funding past first attempts at each assessment.

4.4 Committed to promptly informing BARBRI about any significant changes to any of the commitments that affect the applicant's ability to meet all the Eligibility Criteria for the SWSQF.

Release of Funds to complete the SQE (parts 1 and 2) and Clawback

5.1 Successful applicants will automatically be awarded the funds to complete the SQE 1 preparation course (subject to sections 5.2 and 5.3 below). To be eligible for funding for the SQE 1 assessment, the SQE 2 preparation course and assessment, BARBRI will need to confirm to the SWSQF application committee the following:

5.1.1 In the case of the SQE 1 assessment, that the applicant has completed to BARBRI's satisfaction the relevant preparatory courses and is ready to sit the SQE 1 assessment.

5.1.2 In the case of the SQE 2 preparation course, that the applicant has passed the SQE 1 assessment.

5.1.3 In the case of the SQE 2 assessment, that the applicant has completed to BARBRI's satisfaction the relevant preparatory courses and is ready to sit the SQE 2 assessment.

5.2 Prior to the next stage of funding being released (in each of 5.1.1-5.1.3 (inclusive)), the applicant will be required to reconfirm their commitment to continuing to work in social

welfare law as outlined in section 1 of these Eligibility Criteria. The SWSQF may in its discretion decide not to release the next stage of funds if it feels the applicant no longer meets the criteria outlined in section 1 of these Eligibility Criteria. It is the SWSQF application committee's fiduciary duty to ensure that award funds are applied in pursuit of the qualification of committed social welfare lawyers and so it is important that applicants comply with all obligations to qualify (including engaging with the preparatory work for the SQE courses and exams promptly and diligently). It is also imperative that students engage with the course as it is supposed to be taught/learnt using the online BARBRI Personal Study Plan. This is because reading textbooks will not imbed sufficiently deeply the retained knowledge required for a 16-subject, 360-question MCQ exam. BARBRI will share each applicant's progress in completing the SQE preparatory courses using trackable completion rates on the online BARBRI Personal Study Plan with the SWSQF application committee. In the event of an applicant's:

- 5.2.1** failure to use the online BARBRI Personal Study Plan; and/or
- 5.2.2** repeated failure to complete preparatory work in a timely manner; and/or
- 5.2.3** significant variability in an applicant's engagement or prompt completion of preparatory work

(in each case without extenuating circumstances), the SWSQF application committee may exercise its discretion not to fund the next stage of the SQE (exam or preparatory course, as appropriate) and claw back fees already incurred.

- 5.3** If an applicant needs to defer their SQE preparation course, the applicant will be personally responsible for paying the deferral fee to BARBRI before they can progress to the next stage and the SWSQF application committee releases the next stage of funding. Further details regarding deferrals and guarantees can be found in paragraphs 9 and 10 of BARBRI's terms and conditions: www.barbri.com/sqe/contract-details-requirements
- 5.4** If an applicant should fail their SQE1 and/or SQE2 exam it will be at the discretion of the SWSQF Committee whether the cost of the resit will be covered by the fund, the presumption is that resits will not be funded. The committee will consider applicant engagement with their BARBRI PSP in their decision-making.
- 5.5** If an applicant is successful in being allocated a funding award following this process, the applicant will be asked before the first tranche of funding is released, to sign a tuition and exam fees clawback letter confirming that if they voluntarily elect to no longer work in social welfare law in accordance with section 1 of these Eligibility Criteria, the SWSQF may require them to repay to the SWSQF the SQE tuition and exam fees as set out below:
 - 5.5.1** At any point before they are admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales: 100% of the SQE 1 and 2 preparation and exam fees that have been advanced at the relevant point.
 - 5.5.2** In the calendar year following an applicant's admission to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales: 75% of the total cost of the SQE 1 and 2 preparation and exam fees that have been advanced.
 - 5.5.3** In the second calendar year following an applicant's admission to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales: 50% of the total cost of the SQE 1 and 2 preparation and exam fees that have been advanced.

Support from your Employer

For the purposes of this section 6, social welfare law is as defined in section 1.4.

We require any application to be accompanied by the applicant's employing organisation's confirmation of the matters in sections 6.1-6.3 (inclusive). The applicant's employing organisation must do that by a solicitor or COLP in the employing organisation completing the separate Employer Support Letter:

6.1 Social welfare legal work

- 6.1.1 Consistently on average 70% or more of the applicant's work currently (or if contracted to work will upon joining) focus on social welfare law and that that work is paid employment.
- 6.1.2 It is anticipated that consistently on average the applicant will continue to focus at least 70% of their time during their SQE study and QWE period on social welfare law.
- 6.1.3 The organisation anticipates that the applicant's minimum 70%-time allocation to social welfare law will continue at the organisation as a qualified solicitor for at least two years beyond qualification and admission to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales.

6.2 Capable of passing SQE

The applicant appears capable of passing SQE 1 and SQE 2 at the first attempt.

6.3 Appropriate QWE support and sign off

- 6.3.1 The organisation will provide mentoring and supervisory support to the applicant for at least two years (in accordance with SRA regulations) so that the applicant can complete their QWE and be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in England and Wales.
- 6.3.2 The organisation anticipates being able to sign off the applicant's QWE portfolio (as appropriate) to count as QWE for solicitor qualification purposes as set out by the Solicitors' Regulatory Authority and any other relevant regulation and within guidance application timeframes.

Deadlines, Applicant Availability

- 7.1 The applicant must submit their application form via this webpage: www.clls.org/initiatives/swsqf/applicants by **5pm on Wednesday 12 November 2025**.
- 7.2 The applicant must be available to attend an online interview during the weeks commencing **26 January, 2 February 2026**. We will endeavour to arrange the date and time of the interview with you two weeks before the interview date.
- 7.3 The applicant must be available, ready and prepared to study and sit assessments as below. These dates may be subject to change, and it is the applicant's responsibility to keep themselves informed of, and available to comply with, the dates below and any alterations to them:
 - 7.3.1 SQE 1 course dates: 40-week part-time course (starting April 2026).
 - 7.3.2 SQE 1 assessment date: January 2027 (exact date tbc).
 - 7.3.3 SQE 2 course dates: 20-week part-time course starting May 2027.

- 7.3.4 SQE 2 assessment dates: October 2026 (exact date tbc).
- 7.3.5 SQE 2 only course dates: 20-week part-time course starting May 2026.
- 7.3.6 SQE 2 only assessment dates: October 2026 (exact date tbc).

Reviewing the SWSQF

The CLLS reserves the right in its absolute discretion to make appropriate enhancements and amendments to the SWSQF in line with its experience of operating the SWSQF and in line with sponsor financial commitments