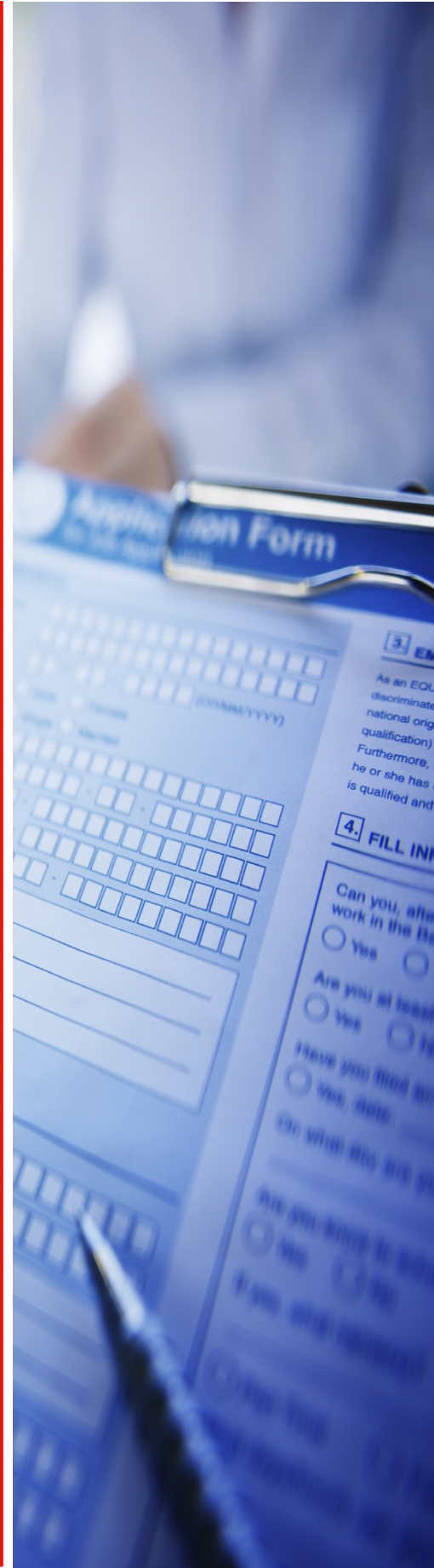


The City of London Law Society Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF)

"Delivering front-line social welfare solicitors"

Frequently Asked Questions



The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2025

Q. Who runs the SWSQF application process?

A. A group of volunteers, known as the Solicitor Creation Team (SCT) from the funding organisations (YLAL, BARBRI, and CLLS) supervise the application process and subsequent awardee management during their SQE advancement. They are totally supportive of this programme and are passionate about it, but they are working on it alongside their full-time jobs, so please keep this in mind when contacting the team.

The SCT will continue to support applicants throughout their SQE and will monitor their progress through the Preparation courses and BARBRI Personal Study Plan (PSP), receiving monthly progress reports from BARBRI. It is important that all applicants notify the SCT and BARBRI, their course provider (via their learning mentor), of any circumstances that may impact their PSP progress. If there is any concern about an applicant's progress, the SCT will request progress updates and/or meetings to discuss further and offer support and guidance if required.

The SWSQF Committee, comprising the initiative's funders along with representatives from BARBRI, and CLLS, will not tolerate any aggressive or demanding communications aimed at the SCT. Such interactions will be handled appropriately. Please keep in mind that the SCT consists of volunteers who generously dedicate their time to this project while also managing full-time responsibilities at busy organisations. The SCT can only assist with SWSQF's immediate processes and do not have any knowledge of and/or hold any influence over external organisations like Kaplan.

Q. When does the application window for SWSQF 2025 open?

A. Applications can be submitted from 12pm on Monday 14 October until 10pm on Thursday 14 November 2024.

Q. Can I still apply if I only need to complete my SQE2 Preparation course and Assessment?

Applicants may apply for funding for SQE2 only. They must indicate this clearly in their application. The dates are the relevant preparatory courses with BARBRI are TBC, however we anticipate that those candidates sitting SQE2 only will have passed by January 2026.

Q. How do I know my application has been successfully submitted?

A. After pressing the final submit button a message will be displayed confirming your application has been successfully submitted. We would recommend taking a screen shot for your records as you will not receive an email confirmation of your submission.

Q. What happens after I submit my application?

A. The SCT will initially review all applications for eligibility, during wc 18 November. Applicants will be informed during wc 2 December if their application fulfils the eligibility criteria, and therefore is being taken forward for a full written application screening assessment. Applicants will then be

advised on 6 January 2025 if they have been successful at this stage and are being taken forward to the interview stage. **During this period, SWSQF will only be able to accept correspondence from applicants if it is to notify us of any change in circumstances affecting the eligibility of their application.**

Q. What happens if I missed the application deadline?

A. We are unable to accept any application submitted after the closing deadline. You may apply to the Fund next year.

Q. If I were to be successful, can I defer my place/funding?

A. Funding will be withdrawn to any applicant who elects to defer before they have started their SQE preparation course. You will be asked to apply for the fund through the usual process the following year.

If an applicant elects to defer during their preparation or assessments, continued funding will be at the discretion of the SWSQF committee. Applicants may be asked to pay any deferral fee and/or required to refund SWSQF for any funds received.

Q. What happens if I fail my SQE 1 and/or SQE 2, will the fund pay for my resit?

A. It will be at the sole discretion of the SWSQF Committee whether the cost of an applicant resitting an SQE examination is paid by the fund. They will consider the applicant's commitment and adherence to their BARBRI PSP throughout their preparation and any grades achieved. They will also consider the needs of current and future awardees and applicants, as well as the funding available to SWSQF, and responsibilities towards funders. Funding allocation has been made for one preparatory course programme and one exam sitting per candidate, and therefore finances may well not permit the Fund to pay for any resits.

The decision of the Committee is final and there is no route to appeal.

Q. Can I change my job during the application process and/or after I receive funding?

A. Applicants are permitted to change job role, move employers, or change the type of social welfare area in which they work but they must still fulfil the Eligibility criteria to remain eligible for the Fund. This includes that any new employer must agree and sign the Employer Support Letter. You must promptly inform the SWSQF committee of any changes [or prospective] of employment. If you no longer meet the criteria this may mean an applicant becomes ineligible for the fund and/or may be required to pay back any funding received.

Q. What if I get a pay rise during the application process?

A. Please inform the SWSQF committee of any changes to your employment during the application process, including pay rises. If your new salary exceeds the salary banding (3.2 in the Eligibility Criteria) you may become ineligible for funding. Failure to disclose a pay rise or any other change

to employment that would make you ineligible will result in your immediate removal from the application process.

Q. I am not currently employed within the Social Welfare sector, but I feel I would benefit from this fund. Can I still apply?

A. We are committed to assisting aspiring lawyers by offering financial support for those employed in "social welfare law for organisations serving disadvantaged communities". However, we recommend that you look into the following organisation or initiatives:

[Breaking Barriers](#) – “specialist refugee employment charity. Enabling refugees to build new lives.”

[Legal Education Foundation](#) – “grant-making foundation using legal education to build a society that fosters the principles of justice and fairness”

[Justice First Fellowship](#) – “The Justice First Fellowship Scheme was established in 2014 to support the next generation of students committed to public interest and social justice issues who want to pursue a career in social welfare law.”

[Law Society Diversity Access Scheme \(DAS\)](#) – “is a unique scholarship programme, designed to address key barriers to the solicitors’ profession faced by those from less advantaged backgrounds.”

Q. Could I lose my funding?

A. Yes, the Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund is an entirely discretionary initiative so funding can be withdrawn at any point during application and assessment stages if an applicant is deemed to be no longer eligible. This could include:

- failing to complete as directed and keep up to date with the assignments delivered by the BARBRI PSP.
- leaving the social welfare sector
- and/or failing SQE assessments.

The SWSQF committee and SCT are here to help all applicants through the process and are 100% committed to 'providing greater access to justice and broadening access to the legal profession,' but failure to meet the criteria outlined in the Eligibility Criteria may result in the loss and/or repayment of all funding.

We also ask that all candidates demonstrate the same degree of respect in return, as the SCT is made up entirely of volunteers, and the nature of the fund requires us to foster a polite, professional and mutually beneficial relationship between all parties involved.

Q. Where can I get more information about the preparatory courses?

A. You can find out more about the SQE1 and SQE2 courses, including their length, content and structure, on BARBRI's website. It is the SCT's expectation that SWSQF awardees will sit the BARBRI 40-week SQE1 prep course (approx. 10 study hours per week) and the 20-week SQE2 prep course (approx. 10 study hours per week).

Q. Will I have any peer support through SWSQF?

A. SWSQF is able to put awardees in contact with each other, should they wish, however there is no obligation for awardees to do this. This is done informally, and SWSQF has no involvement in any informal networks beyond if/when consent is given to share awardees' contact details.

Young Legal Aid Lawyers also has a mentoring scheme which applicants, awardees, or anyone interested in working in legal aid law, may want to join.

Q. What should I do if I have an issue booking my assessments?

A. Should a candidate experience any difficulties with booking their assessments or encounter any other issues related to Kaplan, they are advised to contact Kaplan directly. The SWSQF SCT or Committee does not have access to nor holds any information regarding Kaplan's processes. While candidates are encouraged to inform the SWSQF SCT or Committee of any challenges they face and will receive support as appropriate, it is important to note that the SWSQF SCT or Committee cannot influence Kaplan or its assessment procedures.