

Julie Brannan
Director of Education and Training,
Solicitors Regulation Authority,
The Cube,
199 Wharfside Street,
BIRMINGHAM,
B1 1RN

DX 720293 BIRMINGHAM 47

11th October 2018

By DX and e-mail: sqe@sra.org.uk

Dear Julie

RE: Timing of the SQE Stage 2 Examination

During a recent CLLS workshop on the Future City Lawyer, attended by over 30 of our member firms, we discussed the proposed timing for taking SQE Stage 2. In particular, we discussed whether there will be (i) flexibility for firms to decide when their trainees/prospective trainees take SQE Stage 2; or (ii) a requirement that SQE Stage 2 is taken at a specific time, for example, during the last 12 or six months of the period of recognised training. Based on the discussions during the workshop, which also included an informal poll of attendees, the overwhelming preference of our member firms is to have the flexibility.

Following the discussion we had during the CLLS Training Committee meeting with you and Nick Eastwell on 10 August, we understand that it is also your preference for there to be flexibility. However, we wanted to reiterate to you that this is an important issue for our member firms and that limiting that flexibility will cause very practical business difficulties for us and could negatively impact the experience of our trainees.

As I am sure you appreciate, the period of recognised training, is an extremely complex juggling exercise for those of our member firms, who offer training contracts. It involves balancing the needs of a very busy practice, with ongoing training and development opportunities, including seat rotations and client, international and other secondments, which are invaluable to developing successful lawyers. Including a requirement that SQE Stage 2 is taken in, say, the last 12 or six months of the period of recognised training would significantly complicate this process and potentially jeopardise our ability to offer, and the trainees' desire to take up, some of these development opportunities (e.g. trainees may not want to be out of their home office in the lead up to the exams). If, as we understand is the current intention, there will only be two opportunities per year to sit SQE Stage 2, the problem will be significantly exacerbated.

We understand that a decision has already been made that students will have to pass SQE Stage 1 before they can sit SQE Stage 2. However, we think it is important that, beyond this requirement, flexibility is maintained.

Alongside this, we want to reiterate the value and importance our member firms place on the period of recognised training as a fundamental building block in the qualification process. Whether or not there is an exam at the end of the period of recognised training, we believe it is crucial that this remains in place.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Kozlova Lindsay
Chair
Training Committee,
City of London Law Society

About the CLLS

The City of London Law Society (CLLS) represents approximately 17,000 City lawyers, through individual and corporate membership including some of the largest international law firms in the world. These law firms advise a variety of clients from multinational companies and financial institutions to Government departments, often in relation to complex, multi-jurisdictional legal issues.

The CLLS responds to a wide range of consultations and comments on issues of importance to its members through its 18 specialist Committees. The CLLS is registered in the EU Transparency Register under the number 24418535037-82.

Details of the work of the CLLS Training Committee can be found here:

http://www.citysolicitors.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=158&Itemid=469