



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

"City Law for Social Welfare"

Guidance for Applicants 2022

1 About the Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF)

The SWSQF provides financial assistance for the Solicitors Qualifying Exam preparation courses and assessments (Parts 1 & 2), starting in academic year 2021/22 and concluding in academic year 2023 to outstanding applicants currently working in or contracted to work in social welfare law for organisations serving disadvantaged communities.

Guidance information about the criteria, process and timetable is detailed in this document, along with guidance on completing the separate SWSQF online Application Form (at Appendix 1). Any queries that are not addressed by the Guidance may be emailed to SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk.

2 Application Eligibility Criteria

An applicant must fulfil the criteria set out in The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document to be eligible to be considered for the SWSQF. The applicant will be asked to provide written confirmation of the statements in the Eligibility Criteria 2022 document in the Application Form during the application process.

3 Scope of the Scheme

- 3.1** The SWSQF 2022 is only open to applicants seeking to start the SQE preparation course in academic year 2021-22 (likely April 2022) and sit the SQE part 1 before the end of the academic year 2022-23 (likely January 2023); and seeking to start the SQE part 2 preparation course (likely in April 2023) and sit the SQE part 2 before the end of the academic year 2022-23 (likely in July 2023). We anticipate, and are working on the assumption, that applicants complete both SQE1 and 2 within a two-year period.
- 3.2** Funding provided through the SWSQF is exclusively for the SQE Parts 1 and 2 preparation course and attendant SQE assessments and will be paid directly to (1) BARBRI with whom the applicant will sit the SQE preparation course and (2) Kaplan, who are the assessment provider. You may specify the amount that you wish to apply for up to the full cost of the SQE assessments/SQE preparation course fees. Funds will be allocated on the assumption that you will pass the SQE assessments at the first attempt. See section 5 of the SWSQF Eligibility Criteria for details of how the funds for each stage of the preparation course and exams will be released and the confirmations required from BARBRI to release funding for the next stage.
- 3.3** No additional funding is available to assist with any living expenses such as accommodation, childcare, transport; nor for any other costs which may be incurred in undertaking the SQE assessments/SQE preparation course.
- 3.4** While it is not necessary to have a confirmed place on the SQE Part 1 preparation course before submitting a SWSQF application, all awards will be subject to acceptance onto a BARBRI SQE preparation course and a place on an SQE assessment with Kaplan, anticipated to be passed by the end of the academic year 2022-23 (for SQE Part 1) and 2022-23 (for SQE Part 2)

4 Financial eligibility

- 4.1** Awards made under the SWSQF represent an investment in successful applicants by the City of London Law Society (CLLS) and the SWSQF's city law firm sponsors. As the scheme only provides financial assistance towards SQE preparation course fees and assessments, you must be able to support yourself and your dependants.

- 4.2** If shortlisted, you will be required to provide evidence of your financial position, as detailed in your application at the interview including:
- 4.2.1** Three months' worth of bank statements (covering current account, any savings account, ISA or other way of evidencing that you do not have more than £15,000 in savings).
 - 4.2.2** Loan rejection or acceptances, as appropriate.

5 Process

- 5.1** Applications to the SWSQF must be made by completing the online Application Form in full. If you are shortlisted, you will be invited to an interview with a selection panel before a final decision is made.
- 5.2** Part of the Application Form asks you to complete 4 essay questions. Your application will only be considered if those essay questions are completed in full. Please ensure that you adhere to the word limit prescribed for each question.
- 5.3** The Application Form will be made available in the materials advertising the SWSQF and from the CLLS website from **6 December 2021**.
- 5.4** Completed applications must be submitted by **midnight on 17 January 2022**. No applications will be accepted after this deadline.
- 5.5** Your employer or prospective employer will be required to confirm the matters set out in section 6 of The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document in the Employer Support Letter, which should be submitted with your online Application Form. Applications not accompanied by your Employer Support Letter will not be accepted; neither will applications where your employer is not able to confirm all the statements in the Employer Support Template or which are otherwise incomplete.
- 5.6** Completed applications should be completed using the online Application Form. In exceptional circumstances, such as you do not have sufficient access to a computer, the Application Form may be downloaded as a PDF, completed and sent by email to SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk. If you wish to apply by PDF, please contact SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk **at least a week before the application deadline and before submitting your application** to outline your reasons, giving us time to confirm your eligibility to submit via PDF. Applications that are submitted in more than one document/file will not be accepted.
- 5.7** No extenuating circumstances whatsoever, including technical issues, will be considered for the submission of late applications so you should make sure you send your application in good time.
- 5.8** It will not be possible to amend applications in any way once submitted except in order to update contact details.
- 5.9** We will inform you whether you have been shortlisted for an interview 10 days before the interview date and during w/c **7 February 2022**. Please do not follow up before then.
- 5.10** If you are unsuccessful in being shortlisted for an interview, we are sorry we will not be able to provide individual feedback.

6 Interview and assessment arrangements

- 6.1** If shortlisted, you must be available to attend an interview with our selection panel (which will be conducted online) during the weeks commencing **21 and 28 February 2022**. If you are unable to attend the interview you will be withdrawn from the process and no extenuating circumstances will be considered.
- 6.2** Please let us know in advance if you have accessibility requirements. We will do our best to ensure all requests for reasonable adjustments are met at all stages of the process. Please let us know if you need additional support at any stage by emailing SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk.
- 6.3** We envisage that the shortlisting panel will comprise of representatives from the CLLS including its Training Committee, BARBRI, the Social Welfare Advisory Group (consisting of practitioners within the sector), and Young Legal Aid Lawyers. Our intention is that each application is marked by up to two of the shortlisting panel to ensure fairness, consistency and good practice.
- 6.4** Please ensure you have access to the relevant technology. If you do not have access to a computer for the online interview, please contact SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk **at least 10 days before the interview dates** to explain the situation in fewer than 250 words, and we will contact you to discuss what is possible. While in exceptional circumstances we will endeavour to arrange a face-to-face interview, whether we are able to do so depends on the availability of our interviewing panel and we are not able to guarantee a face-to-face alternative.
- 6.5** If shortlisted for an interview, you will be required to supply **at least one week ahead of the interview**, relevant documentation to support the circumstances detailed in your application including qualification certificate(s) and three months' worth of bank statements (covering current account, any savings account, ISA and any loan rejection or acceptances or other way of evidencing that you do not have more than £15,000 in savings). If you are unable to provide this evidence within the specified timelines, we will not be able to proceed with your application.
- 6.6** You will be advised of the final decision during w/c **7 March 2022** if you proceed to the interview. Please do not follow up before this time.
- 6.7** As the awards are entirely discretionary, it is not possible for you to appeal against decisions taken at any stage of the application process.

7 Data protection

- 7.1** The application process requires personal and financial information to be disclosed. This information will be kept confidential by the selection panel and staff administering the scheme. All personal and financial information will be deleted at the point at which an applicant requests to be removed from the process (by email to: SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk) or when an applicant's application has been processed in full.
- 7.2** Applicants are asked to provide diversity information so that equal opportunity and the effectiveness of the scheme may be monitored. This information will be separated from the application upon receipt and will not be used in any part of the selection process.

8 Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1** Our shortlisting process is conducted 'blind'. This means that the shortlisting panel will not have access to information on your application including your name, gender or the name of your educational institutions.
- 8.2** The diversity questionnaire on the application form is for monitoring purposes. It is separated from your application form before shortlisting and kept in a password protected file that will not be seen by the selection panel.
- 8.3** We particularly encourage applications from those who are not traditionally represented in the legal profession.
- 8.4** We will do our best to ensure all requests for reasonable adjustments are met at all stages of the process. Please let us know if you need additional support at any stage by emailing SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk.

9 Conditions of support

- 9.1** We anticipate applicants completing SQE part 1 (including the assessment) before the end of the academic year 2022-23 and starting the SQE part 2 preparation course and sitting the SQE part 2 before the end of the academic year 2022-23. Completion of both the SQE1 and 2 is expected to be achieved over a two-year period
- 9.2** Under no circumstances will deferral of a start date be considered outside these dates and the award will be withdrawn if a candidate cannot begin the SQE at the specified dates or complete the SQE within the specified time limit.

10 Timetable 2021-2022

6 December 2021	Applications open. The Application Form, Guidance to Applicants and SWSQF Eligibility Criteria documents will be available from the CLLS website: https://www.citysolicitors.org.uk/social-welfare-solicitor-qualification-fund/
17 January 2022	Applications close at midnight
w/c 7 February 2022	All applicants will be notified whether they have been shortlisted for an interview
w/c 21 and 28 February 2022	Interviews with shortlisted applicants
w/c 7 March 2022	All shortlisted applicants advised whether they have been successful

11 Reviewing the SWSQF

This is the first year of 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

Appendix 1

Completing the Online Application Form

This section contains further guidance on completing the online application form.

The Application Form must be completed in a single sitting. There is no option to save your work and complete it later.

We strongly suggest that you read the SWSQF Eligibility Criteria 2022, this Guidance for Applicants Document, the Employer Support Letter and the online Application Form carefully first and gather in advance everything you need to complete the Application Form. You may wish to consider completing the 3 essay questions in section 5 of the application form separately, copying over your completed answers when you complete the Application Form. That will allow you to give the questions the thought they require. You should also ensure that you have your Employer Support Letter (outlined in section 7 of the Application Form) ready to upload as you complete the Application Form.

Complete Applications

Please ensure you answer all the questions on the application form. Incomplete applications will be withdrawn from the application process, as will applications where plagiarism is suspected.

We expect application forms to be completed online. In exceptional circumstances, such as you do not have sufficient access to a computer, the application form may be downloaded as a PDF, completed by hand and sent by email to SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk. If you wish to apply by PDF, please contact SWSQF@citysolicitors.org.uk **at least a week before the application deadline and before submitting your application** to outline your reasons giving us time to confirm your eligibility to submit via PDF. Applications that are submitted in more than one document/file will not be accepted. If we have given you permission to complete a PDF application form by hand, please ensure that your handwriting is legible. If we cannot read your application form, it will be withdrawn from the application process.

Part 1: Your Details

Please complete all the questions in this section ensuring all the details you enter are correct and that we will be able to contact you using the details you submit.

Part 2: Education

Please complete as appropriate, noting that there is no eligibility requirement for a first class or upper second-class degree. Guidance on UK and overseas qualifications and degree equivalents is in section 2 of The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document.

Part 3: Application and Commitment

Please complete these questions, using the guidance above and in The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document.

Part 4: Eligibility Criteria

Please complete these questions fully, using the guidance above and in The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document.

Please note if you are shortlisted for an interview, you will be expected to provide evidence of:

- **Your degree or equivalent qualification.** Guidance on UK and overseas qualifications and degree equivalents is in section 2 of The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document.
- The SWSQF provides financial assistance for the SQE. No assistance is provided towards your living costs. Please ensure that you 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. You will be expected to provide evidence of **your financial circumstances** as outlined in section 4.2 above.

Part 5: Your commitment to becoming a Social Welfare Solicitor

Note the word limit for each of these questions. If you exceed the limit, you will not be able to submit your application. You can check how many words you have written by clicking on the words "TO BE CONFIRMED" under the 'current character count' heading below each text box.

What benefit will your solicitor qualification have for society, your clients, your firm and you?

In answering this question, please be specific about any work you will be able to do or services you will be able to deliver only with this solicitor qualification in the context of your social welfare practice. Please address all stakeholders (your clients, your firm, you and wider society). Please draw on all factors you feel are relevant, including personal experiences you may have had or witnessed growing up and why you chose to study law and specialise in social welfare law. This list is not exhaustive and you may draw on other reasons.

What do you see as being the key challenges facing the social welfare legal sector over the next five years, and what can be done to overcome them?

In answering this question, please focus on the core challenges you think the sector may have and consider potential practical, technological, and campaigning solutions, explaining why you think those solutions could work.

Describe how you anticipate managing study alongside your work and the processes you have put in place to support your intention to pass SQE 1 and 2 at the first attempt.

In answering this question, consider that you will be studying for at least some of the SQE part-time alongside your work. As an approximate guide, the part time SQE requires a commitment of approximately 10 hours per week over 40 weeks for SQE 1 and approximately 10 hours over 12 weeks for SQE 2, plus the time preparing for the assessments. If you elect for the full-time SQE 1 preparation course, it is 20 hours of study per week, plus the assessment study time.

Please be specific about the processes you will put in place to support this arrangement enabling you to successfully pass SQE 1 and 2 at the first attempt and within the timelines described above.

Please read each of the questions carefully and ensure your answer to each is no longer than the word count specified in the relevant section of the application form. Please do not include footnotes as part of the word count. If you include any text from somebody else's work, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If we suspect parts of your answer to have been

plagiarised, your application will be withdrawn from the application process. Please do not contact us to ask how you should answer the questions – you should decide what angle to take and what to focus on.

Why should you receive the award?

Please draw on all factors you feel are relevant.

Part 6: Qualifying work experience

Please complete the questions as per the Application Form. Please familiarise yourself with the rules regarding the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) assessments and Qualifying Work Experience (QWE) Please note that not all work experience, work placements and internships will count towards QWE. Please see: <https://www.sra.org.uk/trainees/qualifying-work-experience/qualifying-work-experience-employers/meeting-standards/> for further guidance on what counts as good QWE.

Part 7: Employer Support

We will require your employer (or if contracted to work in the future, your prospective employer) to confirm all the matters outlined in section 6 of The Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF) Eligibility Criteria 2022 document. If your application form is returned without this confirmation or the answers do not meet all the criteria, you will be withdrawn from the process.