



Association of Women Solicitors

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*Essential for Success*

## **A new route to Qualification: New Regulations**

Response - Association of Women Solicitors, London

### **About Association of Women Solicitors, London**

Association of Women Solicitors, London was founded in 1992 and its aims include representing, supporting and developing the interests of women solicitors. Membership is open to all women solicitors and trainees and associate membership to other women lawyers including barristers, legal executives and paralegals. More information can be found on our website <http://www.awslondon.co.uk>

## A new route to Qualification: New Regulations

### Response

For the reasons given below we advise an amendment to Part 1 Regulation 2.1 (c) concerning Qualifying Work Experience as follows;-

#### Qualifying work experience

2.1 Qualifying work experience must:

(a) comprise experience of providing legal services which provides you the opportunity to develop the prescribed competences for solicitors;

(b) be of a duration of a total of at least two years full time or equivalent;  
and

(c) be carried out under an arrangement or employment with no more than four separate firms, educational institutions or other organisations

*following recruitment by an open selection process including advertisement.*

Whilst the new route to qualification may bring about improved access to the profession for some from less privileged backgrounds and others (for example women starting out on a career after having children) it does not address the current systemic problems of unfairness in the recruitment of interns. Until these issues are resolved the SQE in our view is unlikely to overcome the fundamental barriers to widening access.

We are pleased to see that the definition of Qualifying Work Experience (“QWE”) builds on the existing expectation for aspirant solicitors to have acquired experience from several internships but currently the majority of those placements are both unpaid and unadvertised. You acknowledged in your own SQE Equality & Diversity Risk Assessment that unpaid QWE could advantage candidates able to work without a salary but the absence of advertisement was not considered. This needs to be remedied.

According to a recent\* report from the Institute of Policy and Research each year 11,000 internships are advertised but the true number that take place is estimated to be as high as 70,000. Thus seven times as many internships are unadvertised as are advertised. How can a candidate from a less privileged background hope to secure the necessary QWE if he or she is competing with individuals who already have the necessary connections and are able to “snap up” unadvertised positions?

Our view is that if this issue remains unaddressed solicitors will continue to be drawn from the small pool of candidates with the means and connections to obtain QWE. We ask you therefore to take our proposal very seriously.

AWS London  
July 2017

\* April 2017 The Inbetweeners The new role of internships in the graduate labour market.  
<https://www.ippr.org/publications/the-inbetweeners>