

## Response to the delay in the provision of SQE2 exams

### About us

1. Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) is a group of lawyers who are committed to practicing in areas of law, both criminal and civil, that have traditionally been publicly funded. YLAL members include students, paralegals, trainee solicitors, pupil barristers and junior qualified lawyers based throughout England and Wales. We believe that the provision of good quality publicly funded legal help is essential to protecting the interest of the vulnerable in society and upholding the rule of law.
2. This is our statement addressing the delay in the provision of the SQE2 exams.

### Delay with SQE2

3. YLAL has been made aware of an informal announcement by the SRA and Kaplan (who are responsible for assessing SQE examinations), which will mean a delay to many hoping to sit the SQE2 examinations scheduled for October 2022. This announcement appears to have been made via a webinar.
4. Zoe Robinson, director of qualifications at Kaplan, stated during the webinar that *“it will not be possible for the SQE1 in July, for candidates to move onto the SQE2 in October”* due to the length of time it will take to mark the SQE1 exams ([source](#)). While YLAL appreciate the need to ensure accuracy in the results they are concerned about the effect that this delay would have on their members.

### Our concerns

5. YLAL notes that the delay in the SQE2 examinations will mean that students who successfully sit their SQE1 examinations in July 2022 will be unable to sit SQE2 in October 2022. This will delay their anticipated qualification date by almost 9 months. This may lead to jobs previously offered being withdrawn. It at the very least mean many YLALs will remain in lower paid paralegal roles for longer than anticipated.
6. YLAL is concerned that this vital communication regarding the SQE took place informally in a webinar Q&A session. The announcement came without any acknowledgement of the disruption it will cause to hundreds of aspiring solicitors trying to enter the profession. This is not acceptable. To date, no formal announcement of this planned change has been made, and there will no doubt be many affected who remain unaware of the delay to their qualification. We ask Kaplan and the SRA to urgently clarify the position through a formal announcement. YLAL note with concern that the [SRA's own website](#) continues to

state that it will be possible to sit both SQE1 & 2 in one academic year, something which will now not be possible for 2022.

7. YLAL also asks the SRA and Kaplan to explain why there will be a delay in providing results for the July SQE1, which is a multiple-choice exam set and marked by the SRA/Kaplan.
8. YLAL is also concerned that expensive SQE preparation courses continue to be advertised and enrolled on without reference to this announcement. YLAL is aware of at least one major course provider's admissions team who, as of this week, appeared unaware of the planned change, and were informing prospective students they will be able to sit SQE1 & 2 in 2022. This means students will be paying to study for exams that they are no longer able to sit in the timescale promoted.
9. Years of underfunding have led to a dearth of training contracts in the publicly funded sector, which has made the SQE route to qualification an attractive alternative for many YLALs. The SRA's announcement is therefore likely to disproportionately impact those wishing to qualify in the already precarious legal aid sector, and to provide a further hurdle to them entering the profession. They are also more likely to be out of pocket if enrolled on a preparation course for exams they cannot sit, as those in the legal aid sector are more likely to be self-funding their studies.
10. YLAL asks at the very least that if results from the July 2022 SQE1 exam are unavoidably delayed, in the interest of fairness an alternative should be found for 2022. For example, allowing students who sit the July SQE1 to register for the October SQE2 before receiving their SQE1 results. YLAL would be happy to discuss what a fair alternative may consist of.
11. One of the fundamental aims of the transition to the SQE was to make the profession more accessible. YLAL hopes that the SRA will demonstrate this by acting quickly to provide clarity and rectify this situation.

Young Legal Aid Lawyers

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